

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 433 549

CS 216 895

AUTHOR Avila, Judy; Pahuski, Linda; Perez, Linda
TITLE Developing Language Arts Skills through the Reading and Writing Connection.
PUB DATE 1999-05-00
NOTE 127p.; Master's Action Research Project, Saint Xavier University and IRI/Skylight.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses (040) -- Tests/Questionnaires (160)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Action Research; Elementary Education; High Schools; *Instructional Effectiveness; *Language Arts; Reading Improvement; Reading Instruction; *Reading Writing Relationship; Writing Improvement; Writing Instruction

ABSTRACT

This report describes a program for the development of language arts skills through the reading and writing connection. The targeted population is a split third and fourth grade class, a third grade class, and a high school cross-categorical special education class. The difficulties in the area of language arts development and student self-perception of achievement were documented through surveys, reading inventories, and student writing samples. The results of a standardized reading test revealed that a large portion of the students in the targeted classrooms lacked skills related to poor language development in the area of reading comprehension. In addition to poor language development, self-perception surveys in the areas of reading and writing revealed that a significant portion of the students in the targeted classes had an inaccurate self-perception of their achievement in the areas of reading and writing. A review of solution strategies found in current research and educational literature, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the selection of the major components of the intervention: implementation of Power Writing, opportunities for self-selected reading, opportunities for journal writing and reflective journaling, and the use of multiple intelligence practices to reach students of different learning styles. Post-intervention data indicated an increase in reading achievement standardized test scores; an increased understanding of the structure of written paragraphs; and more accurate self-perceptions in the areas of reading and writing. Contains 64 references, 20 figures, and 4 tables of data. Appendixes contain parent and student surveys, reader and writer self-perception measures, sample writing prompts, reading log sheets, writing worksheets, a writing rubric, and data tables. (Author/SR)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

DEVELOPING LANGUAGE ARTS SKILLS
THROUGH THE READING AND WRITING CONNECTION

Judy Avila
Linda Pahuski
Linda Perez

An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & IRI/Skylight

Field-Based Masters Program

Chicago, Illinois

May, 1999

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- ☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.
- ☐ Minor changes have been made to
improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this
document do not necessarily represent
official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS
BEEN GRANTED BY

J. Avila

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

SIGNATURE PAGE

This project was approved by

Larissa K. Nulley
Advisor

John S. Patton MA MAT
Advisor

Beverly Gullett Ph.D.
Dean, School of Education

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 - PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT.....	1
General Statement of the Problem.....	1
Immediate Problem Context.....	1
The Surrounding Community.....	14
National Context of the Problem.....	17
CHAPTER 2 - PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION.....	21
Problem Evidence.....	21
Probable Causes.....	35
CHAPTER 3 - THE SOLUTION STRATEGY.....	42
Literature Review.....	42
Project Objectives and Processes.....	63
Project Action Plan.....	63
Methods of Assessment.....	66
CHAPTER 4 - PROJECT RESULTS.....	67
Historical Description of the Intervention.....	67
Presentation and Analysis of Results.....	75
Conclusions and Recommendations.....	89
REFERENCES.....	97
APPENDICES.....	102

Abstract

This report will describe a program for the development of language arts skills through the reading and writing connection. The targeted population is a split third and fourth grade class, a third grade class, and a high school cross-categorical special education class. The difficulties in the area of language arts development and student self-perception of achievement were documented through surveys, reading inventories, and student writing samples.

Evidence of the need for improvement in the area of reading comprehension was shown through a variety of baseline data. The results of a standardized reading test revealed that a large portion of the students in the targeted classrooms lacked skills related to poor language development in the area of reading comprehension. In addition to poor language development, self-perception surveys in the areas of reading and writing revealed that a significant portion of the students in the targeted classes had an inaccurate self-perception of their achievement in the areas of reading and writing.

A review of solution strategies found in current research and educational literature, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the selection of the major components of the intervention: implementation of Power Writing, opportunities for self-selected reading, opportunities for journal writing and reflective journaling, and the use of multiple intelligence practices to reach students of different learning styles.

Post-intervention data indicated an increase in reading achievement standardized test scores. The students' reading, as well as writing, has improved. The students have an increased understanding of the structure of written paragraphs. Post-intervention data also revealed that a significant portion of the students in the targeted classes may be developing more accurate self-perceptions in the areas of reading and writing.

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The students in this research study are from three schools. The students of the targeted split third and fourth grade class, third grade class, and high school special education cross-categorical class generally exhibit difficulties in reading and writing activities, ranging from answering questions in complete sentences to developing clear, concise paragraphs in an organized manner, and may indicate poor language development. These students also have a tendency toward poor self-perception in the areas of reading and writing. Evidence for existence of this difficulty includes student writing samples, writing rubrics, current achievement test scores, and parent and student surveys.

Immediate Problem Context - Site A

Site A is an inner city public school located in the near south section of a major Midwestern city. The school is the oldest in the area. Originally built in 1872, it had an enrollment of 247. In 1875, boundary changes occurred. Additions to the building were made in 1887 and again in 1924. The first graduation was held in 1921. This school was a special education center in 1950 and included divisions for the mentally handicapped, hard of hearing, and the partially sighted. During the 1995-1996 school year, this site underwent a period of renovation. A new lighting system replaced the older, single-hanging hall lights. A modern heating system replaced the older boilers. The entire school was rewired to conform to higher electrical

standards. There was a new speaker system installed in the auditorium. Asbestos removal and inside painting also took place. Only the oldest section of the school was sandblasted during this period. In order to keep the historical significance of the building, much is still intact. It is hoped that this site will one day be given landmark status. In 1996, Site A became part of the area's beautification project and trees were planted along the sidewalk in front of the school. In October 1997, the iron playground was replaced by new, safe, and colorful equipment.

This elementary school is composed of grades kindergarten through eight. The 1997 State School Report Card lists the student body at 425. There is one split kindergarten and first grade, one split third and fourth grade, one split fifth and sixth grade, and one split seventh and eighth grade. There is a state prekindergarten that will soon be changed into a Head Start Program. The school also contains many special education divisions as follows: one intermediate/upper visually impaired class and four hard of hearing classes that include preschool, primary, intermediate, and upper divisions. There is also one primary and one upper division for children with cognitive disabilities and one classroom for children with learning disabilities. Bus service is provided for all students in special education. There are three bilingual Chinese classes that service children in the regular primary, intermediate, and upper divisions.

There are 22 students presently enrolled in the targeted split third and fourth grade classroom at Site A. Included in the class are children with learning disabilities, cognitive delays, and/or speech impairments. There are also children who need bilingual support services. Chronologically, the children range from 8 to 11 years. Their varying disabilities create adverse

effects on learning in the classroom. Retention, concentration, and attention skills are difficult for these children. All benefit from freedom of movement in order to see and interact with presented materials.

Modes of learning vary with each child. Auditory and kinesthetic senses are prevalent. In the classroom, the students require various levels of instructional materials. Goals and objectives for special needs students are written annually as part of their Individualized Education Plan (IEP). All children receive individualized attention along with small group activities. The children are tested in the spring with the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. With the third grade students, the Illinois Goals Assessment Program (IGAP) is also used.

The 1997 State School Report Card listed the average class size for this site as reported for the first school day in May as follows: kindergarten, 31.5; grade 1, 28.5; grade 3, 23.0; grade 6, 37.0; and grade 8, 27.5. Other school characteristics included in the 1997 State School Report Card were as follows: attendance 94.7%, low income 89.9%, limited English proficient 45.6%, mobility rate 19.7%, and chronic truancy 1.2%. The racial-ethnic background of the students included Asian/Pacific Islander 45.6%, Black 22.4%, White 19.5%, Hispanic 11.5%, and Native American 0.9%.

The staff of Site A consists of a principal and an assistant principal, 23 classroom teachers, two full time clerks, nine classroom aides, one preschool aide, gym teacher, librarian, music teacher, computer teacher, science teacher, counselor, one part-time art teacher, one part-time social worker, one part-time nurse, one part-time audiologist, one part-time psychologist, one part-time ESL teacher, one speech teacher, and one speech assistant (four days a week). There is a science lab, a library media center, and an equipment room that houses four copy machines, two

laminating machines, and one bookbinding machine. The lunchroom, located in the basement area, has one manager and five employees. There is one engineer and four custodians. There are four women from the surrounding ethnic community who assist in the primary classrooms and help with language translations. Of the 30 full time staff members, 14 are Black, 12 are White, and 4 are Asian. Seven out of 30 are male. As stated in the 1997 State School Report Card, the average teacher salary for 1996-1997 was \$40,505. The average administrator salary for the same year was \$66,100. The average operating expenditure per pupil was \$5,850. The average teaching experience was 18 years. Teachers with master's degrees and above comprised 52% of the staff.

Site A has a Parent Teacher Organization and a Local School Council that work cooperatively for the benefit of the children, school, and community. Senior citizens from the nearby service league assist the primary grades. Translation services are provided in Spanish and Chinese to assist parents as well as children.

The faculty is team oriented. The primary, intermediate, and upper teams share active roles in the educational planning for the school. Results of the children's work can be seen throughout the building. The music teacher and the fifth grade teacher work together to form the school band, a recorder band, and a xylophone band. The children display their talents during assemblies and concerts. The school participates in science fairs, math counts, history fairs, and international festivals. The ethnic makeup of the school enables the students to share their research as they investigate their own heritage in the areas of African-American history, Hispanic heritage, and Asian-American culture. Breakfasts and lunches are available. Students participate

in either free, reduced, or paying programs. There are after school academic and social programs. These children also are provided with supper. The school programs are intended to provide variety in order to meet the needs of the individual children.

Beginning in September 1998, there will be a major emphasis on increasing reading and writing skills, improving literacy instruction and awareness, creating and integrating the science curriculum with other disciplines, enhancing the child-centered hands-on media center, extending award incentives to include academic and non academic activities, introducing an art program, and supporting the adult education programs. Grants were written to fund programs in multicultural literacy from the Annenberg Foundation (Hug-A-Book). The Academy of Sciences will introduce a new hands-on science program to be used in the intermediate grades.

Immediate Problem Context - Site B

The targeted class at Site B is a third grade class. This class is heterogeneously mixed by gender and achievement levels of the students. The teaching styles used in this class are a mixture of traditional direct teaching and child-centered methods, such as learning centers, cooperative learning, and critical thinking methods.

Site B is currently in its adoption year of a new reading series. The new series is an integrated series, integrating reading, grammar, writing, and spelling into one book. The new series was chosen to be able to better prepare students for stricter state standards and the new Illinois Standards Assessment Testing (ISAT) program.

Site B is the second oldest building in its district. It is a K-4 building which consists of 20 classrooms. There is one half-day kindergarten, four first grade classrooms, five second grade classrooms, five third grade classrooms, and four fourth grade classrooms. This school year, four

classrooms were added because of enrollment increases. In the building, there is also a library and a gym for physical education. Space is extremely limited in this building. The kindergarten classroom is currently used half-day by one of the music teachers. The teachers' lounge is currently half a classroom that was used as a resource room in the past. The gym and music classes are doubled, two homerooms share the same gym and music times because of space and time limitations. During the summer of 1999, additions will be made to build new classrooms and improve the existing classrooms at Site B.

The areas of reading and writing are a focus of many of the programs offered for students at Site B through the curriculum as well as additional school activities. Although state IGAP scores in the areas of reading and writing have increased in the last few years, 14% of the population tested still do not meet the state goals for reading. At Site B, the entire staff serves as the school improvement team. The school improvement team works together to examine areas of weaknesses and strengths, and then makes plans to improve the weaknesses.

In addition to refining the school improvement plan with specific skills to be taught and tested, the staff has implemented several programs to serve the needs of the students at Site B. One of these programs is the Reading Improvement Program. This program is a tutoring program for students with reading difficulties identified by grades, teacher recommendations, and achievement test scores. This is a vigorous and retroactive program in which the students receive one hour of tutoring by a grade-level teacher before or after school four times a week. The tutor teaches them the skills that will be used in class in advance so the children can feel knowledgeable and comfortable enough to participate at an average level with their classmates.

Bookmobile is a program run by the community local library. The bookmobile is a library on wheels that travels to different schools in the community. The bookmobile comes to Site B once a week. Any child who has a library card from any library in the library system can borrow books from the bookmobile.

Another program targeted at literacy at Site B is Wee Deliver. This is a pen pal program to encourage letter writing among the students. Each class is given a cross-grade pen pal class. These pen pal classes write each other letters and get together to do reading and writing activities. The students can also write letters to any other student or teacher in the school. Fourth grade students are taught the post office system and serve as the mail persons who sort and deliver the mail.

Still another program that promotes literacy at Site B is the Young Authors competition. The Young Authors competition is actually a part of the curriculum at Site B. During the third quarter of the school year, each student writes a story which is judged against grade-level stories. At each grade level, the winners are then sent to the district level. The winners of the district level are then sent on to the state contest.

In addition to the many programs available to the students at Site B to improve their literacy skills, the students in the targeted class also have pen pals from another state. The students have written letters back and forth to their pen pals. This teaches them about letter writing, communication, and geographic differences.

Site B is one of five elementary schools in a southwest suburban area of a major metropolitan city in the Midwest. The 1997 State School Report Card gave some useful information when examining Site B. Total enrollment at Site B was 347. The racial ethnic

background of the students was 97.7% White, 1.2% Hispanic, 0.9% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.3% Black. This was similar to the racial/ethnic background of the entire district, which was comprised of 2,106 students. According to the 1997 State School Report Card, low-income students are from families receiving public aid, living in institutions for neglected or delinquent children, being supported in foster homes with public funds, or eligible to receive free or reduced lunches. Low-income students made up 2.3% of the population at Site B. Limited-English-proficient students are those who have been found eligible for bilingual education. Limited-English-proficient students made up 0.6% of the population at Site B. The attendance rate at Site B was 96.3%, which was higher than both the district and state attendance rates, which were 96.1% and 93.8% respectively. There was a 0.0% chronic truancy rate. The student mobility rate was 6.3%. The average class size tended to be similar or higher than the average class size at the state level. The average kindergarten class size at Site B was 22.0, 23.3 at grade one, and 28.0 at grade three.

There is a total of 27 individuals on the teaching staff at Site B. There is one half-time kindergarten teacher, four first grade teachers, five second grade teachers, five third grade teachers, and four fourth grade teachers. Additional teaching staff includes two music teachers, two gym teachers, one speech improvement teacher, two reading improvement teachers, and one special education resource teacher. The racial/ethnic background of the teachers in the district of Site B according to the 1997 State School Report Card was 99.1% White and 0.9% Asian/Pacific Islander. The teaching staff of the district was 87.6% female and 12.4% male according to the 1997 State School Report Card. The average years of experience was 12.1 years with an

average income of \$33,142. At the district level, 34.7% of teachers had a master's degree or above. The average administrator salary was \$68,477. Operating expenditure per student in 1997 was \$4,289.

Immediate Problem Context - Site C

Site C is a high school special education class in a suburban area of a major Midwestern city. The class specifically involved is a combined English 1/English 2 class in the special education setting. The class meets during the first hour of the school day for 55 minutes daily, unless the schedule is shortened for the day due to assemblies or school testing. The curriculum for this class includes the skill areas of reading and comprehension improvement (using all types of materials from labels to short stories), spelling and vocabulary improvement (utilizing survival and content words, as needed individually), written skill improvement (sentences, letters, forms), and speaking skills (simple speeches, role-playing, etc.). Cooperative learning activities are utilized in the class to some degree to encourage improvement in the areas of social behavior and working together as teams, as well as to improve academic achievement. The speech therapist also spends one day a week in class (currently every Friday) to work on language development using a variety of activities that are agreed upon by the two facilitators. Activities usually involve sentence structure, vocabulary development, and speaking skills that are linked to that week's regular class materials. Occasionally, a game, such as "Lingo Bingo," may be part of the activity, especially prior to long weekends or holidays.

The class is composed of eight students - four freshmen and four sophomores. (The ninth and tenth students were recently added to the class as the second quarter of the school year began, but will not be included in this study due to the late entry date.) Of the eight original

students, six are classified as students with learning disabilities, one is classified as a student with moderate mental impairment, and one is classified as a student with emotional disabilities. Three of the students are also eligible for speech and language services, and six of the students receive social work services on a regular basis. The students' reading levels range from a 2.9 through 5.7 grade equivalency. All of the students exhibit problems with basic spelling. They also experience difficulties with written expression skills ranging from writing simple sentences that express complete thoughts to organizing their writing into short, meaningful paragraphs. Although behavior problems are not a major focus of this class, the need does exist to improve time on task during daily activities.

All of the students in the special program are integrated into regular education classes to some degree during the normal school day. Physical education (which includes one semester of health during freshman year and one quarter of classroom driver's education during the sophomore year) is required during all four years of high school and is usually one class in which everyone participates (unless medically exempt). A number of classes fall under the category of Regular Education Initiative (REI). In these classes a special education teacher teams with a regular education teacher to teach a class in which a significant number of special education students are present. Different teaching methods and alternative materials and lessons may be used, as needed, to assist all of the students in the REI classes, not just the special education students. Currently, REI classes are found in the English, math, social studies, home economics, and physical education departments of the school with plans to expand to the science and business departments next year.

Classes offered within the special education department include English, math, science, social studies, health, and vocational education at all levels in the high school program. These courses are available for those students who need more individualized instruction or more structure and cannot successfully be included in the regular education program to attain their credits toward graduation. These students are required to meet the credit standards, as all other students in the district, and do receive a regular diploma upon graduation.

Due to recent changes in the district's graduation requirements, plans are being made to add a keyboarding class and expand the science and social studies course offerings within the department for next year.

The district had, until recently, required a total of 20 credits for graduation - three in English, two in math, two in science, two in social studies, four in physical education, one-half in consumer education, one in business/technology, and five and one-half credits of elective courses. Beginning with the class of 2002, students will be required to accumulate 22 credits for graduation. This will include four credits in English, three in math, three in science, three in social studies, four in physical education, one in keyboarding and microcomputer applications, one-half in consumer education, and three and one-half credits in elective courses. Due to this change, plans are currently being made within the Special Education department to add a keyboarding/microcomputer applications course, a third science course, and a third social studies course to the Special Education curriculum to meet future needs.

As reported in the 1997-1998 State School Report Card presented by the district this fall, the school had an enrollment of 1,020 students during the 1997-1998 school year. Of this number, 71 were in the cross-categorical special education program previously described. Based on

enrollments reported as of September 30, 1997, the racial/ethnic background for this school was as follows: 75.5% White, 19.6% Black, 2.6% Hispanic, 1.7% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.6% Native American. The attendance rate was 94.1%, and the student mobility rate was 6.7%. Students from low-income families made up 13.3% of the school's population. Although 0.2% of the students were identified as Limited-English-Proficient, there are currently no bilingual education services offered at the school. The graduation rate for this school during the 1997-1998 school year was 94.1%.

Site C is one of four high schools in the high school district, and was the second to open in 1961 due to rapid population growth in the area. The district encompasses approximately 29 square miles and receives students from nine elementary schools from nine communities. The district is operated by a Board of Education, consisting of seven members elected by the voters of the high school district.

Site C offers courses at the basic, average, honors, and advanced placement (AP) levels. The school is currently in the process of updating its technology equipment. An expansive six-year technology plan was approved by the Board of Education in June of 1997. A new computer lab has been added (to two already existing) to assist students with below grade-level skills in the areas of math and reading. The Instructional Materials Center (IMC) has recently upgraded its computers as well as increasing the number available for student use. A number of computers will also be made available to the special education department to be placed in classrooms for student access.

A grant awarded over the last two years has enabled a social studies and a science class to have access to the Internet as part of their studies. The availability of Internet access is still

limited at this point, but plans to update the phone system and provide jacks for modem access have been completed at this point. Training on the Internet and its use is currently a functional part of on-going staff development. Students currently enrolled in a variety of computer courses offered by the district are also becoming eligible for Internet access as they progress in their respective classes.

A standard swimming pool and weight-training/work-out room with fairly new exercise equipment are two assets of the physical education department. The industrial arts department was recently renovated to improve the auto technology area for a district-wide vocational course offered at this site. Similar upgrades were also made for the fine arts department for a commercial arts course and the home economics department for a child care program that helps prepare students interested in careers related to day care and early childhood education. The local park district also provides assistance in improving various areas of the building and sports fields in exchange for use of the facilities for their community programs throughout the year.

Special student programs include special education (as previously described), vocational education, gifted, summer school, night school, work-study, and Title I programs. Many extracurricular activities are also offered by the school, and there is strong support by parents' Booster clubs for a variety of these activities helping to offset the financial burden for both the school budget and those students participating in these activities.

In comparison to the school, the district's racial/ethnic background (based on September 30, 1997 figures from the 1997-1998 State School Report Card) was as follows: 58.7% White, 35.0% Black, 4.3% Hispanic, 1.6% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.4% Native American. The

attendance rate for the district was 93.9% and the mobility rate is 12.9%. Students from low-income families made up 13.7% of the district population and 0.5% of the students were eligible for bilingual education programs. The district's graduation rate was 86.7%.

During the 1997-1998 school year, the district employed 255 full-time teachers, 53.1% of whom are female and 46.9% are male. The racial/ethnic background of the staff was as follows: 90.2% White, 9.4% Black, and 0.4% Asian/Pacific Islander. Average teaching experience for the district was 17.9 years with 71.2% of the staff having a master's degree or above. The average teacher salary for the 1996-1997 school year was \$58,330, and the average administrator salary for that year was \$76,553. The pupil-teacher ratio for the district was 18.3:1 (as compared to 19.4 for site C), and the pupil-administrator ratio was 142.3:1 (as compared to a statewide average of 250.6:1).

Students are regularly assessed by the Tests of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP) in the fall, Illinois Goals Assessment Program (IGAP) in the spring, Criterion Referenced Tests (CRT) at the conclusion of each semester, and alternative test measures for those special education students who are exempt from the previously mentioned tests. These alternative test measures often include the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement (KTEA), Peabody Individualized Achievement Test - Revised (PIAT-R), evaluation of individual educational program goals and objectives, and portfolio work when available. Course offerings are reviewed yearly and course objectives are constantly being upgraded as a result of school improvement programs.

Community Description - Site A

Site A is located in the near south side section of a large Midwestern city. It is bordered on the north by a large Asian population. There are many restaurants, small businesses, and

ethnic stores in the area, many of which are family owned and operated. This area has a history filled with tradition. Many houses are between 120 and 130 years old. Trucking companies and box and bindery factories once thrived in the area. Before the major expressway was built, this neighborhood shared a square that included a library, a gym, and a skating area. A hospital that served this community was recently torn down. Still surviving the past is an old neighborhood Italian American Club. Presently, this community is multiethnic, with the majority being of Asian ancestry. Other ethnic groups include Croatians, Italians, Irish, Hispanics, and Blacks. Site A has railroad tracks that form the western boundary and a major expressway as the eastern boundary. Public transportation is available through bus service and rapid transit, making it convenient to work in the large city. Modern town homes, one housing project, and two senior centers now stand where abandoned factories and buildings once stood. The community site includes five precincts. There are between 500 and 700 registered voters per precinct. There are three churches, two parochial schools, and two public schools also in the area.

Community Description - Site B

Site B is a well-balanced community that offers suburban services and amenities while retaining a rural flavor. It is located southwest of a major Midwest city at the crossroads of several major highways. There are currently approximately 12,000 residents in the community of Site B, double the population recorded in the 1990 census. The community of Site B is in a period of rapid change. There are currently several new subdivisions being developed, which is contributing to the rapid growth of the enrollment of the district of Site B as well as neighboring school districts. The median age of people living in this community is 32.5 according to the community web site. The number of households in this community is currently 3,870. This

community offers several tax advantages such as the lowest municipal property taxes in its county, no utility taxes, low per capita debt, stable economic water and sewer rates, and lower retail sales tax compared to a neighboring county and that of the nearby city. Several major corporations are located in this community. The most significant factor in this community is the rapid growth and development that it is encountering.

Community Description - Site C

Site C is located in an area of economically diverse communities with moderate retail and manufacturing bases. Based on figures compiled during the 1996-1997 school year for grant submissions, the district's socioeconomic status can be described as average to slightly below average. The average median income for families within the district is \$38,525 with approximately 7.9% considered to be at poverty status. The average unemployment rate for the communities within the district is approximately 7.4%.

There are pockets of very substantial housing developments (valued at \$300,000 to \$400,000) and areas of numerous Housing and Urban Development (HUD) homes. There are more forest preserves for recreational use in this high school district's boundaries than anywhere else in this Midwestern metropolitan area, and the district contains over 30% nontaxable land.

Numerous interstate highways provide easy access to surrounding and outlying areas. Various forms of public transportation including regional bus services and commuter trains are also readily available for commuters. Even though this access to the neighboring large Midwestern city is available, many of the students of this school have never had the opportunity

to visit museums, art galleries, or even the city itself. A multitude of churches and community services as well as a fairly new county courthouse and county services building are also within the district's boundaries.

This district has had one of the lowest assessed property valuations in the area for over 20 years. It has also had the highest tax rate of any of the other high school districts within its county. A referendum was recently passed (after three tries) allowing the district to raise the tax rate and continue services that were in danger of cuts or elimination prior to the referendum. The operating expense per pupil for the 1997-1998 school year, according to the State School Report Card was \$8,076.

National Context of the Problem

Poor language arts development and low self-perception appear to be a nationwide concern. According to Bandura's theory of perceived self-efficacy, a child's perception of writing ability will ultimately affect his or her growth in writing. Furthermore, self-perception can also affect a student's reading achievement (as cited in Henk & Melnick, 1995). In a national poll, teachers rank motivating students in the area of reading as their first priority (p. 470).

The reading achievement levels of today's students have sparked many debates in the United States political realm. "Debate continues to rage in research and academic circles over beginning reading instruction" (Moore, 1998). The results of the 1994 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as the Nation's Report Card, found that 40% of fourth graders were reading below the basic level (Manzo, 1998). These findings added to the growing national concern about the state of our nation's reading achievement. Shortly after these shocking inadequacies in reading achievement were seen, Richard W. Riley, U.S. Secretary of

Education, urged schools and families to work harder to improve reading and writing skills (Internet). In response to growing concern in the area of literacy, the U.S. Department of Education developed the Read* Write* Now! initiative and the Family Involvement Partnership to mobilize United States citizens in becoming a nation of active participants in improving the education of its youth (p. 1).

The concern for the nation's status of reading achievement has gone beyond the U.S. Department of Education and has been the center of several other governmental initiatives. President Clinton proposed an initiative during his State of the Union Address in 1997 that would enlist millions of volunteers across the nation to help each of the country's children to read proficiently by the end of third grade through voluntary tutoring programs (Manzo, 1998). In response to this initiative, although doomed by Congress, there have been increasing numbers of reading tutors across the United States. Countering Clinton's initiative to improve reading, United States Representative Bill Gooding proposed the Reading Excellence Act, aimed at improving classroom instruction (p. 1).

Research has found that 20% - 30% of children may have difficulty in reading instruction, regardless of the approach used (Moore, 1998). The reasons that children fail to read varied. The United States Department of Education Research indicated that reading and writing are greatly influenced by the literacy activities present in the home.

There is no single way to attack these issues. Educators in the past have used techniques such as the traditional teaching method, the holistic approach, and the thematic approach to

language arts instruction. The traditional teaching method focuses on content-rich curriculum and emphasizes teacher-student and student-material interactions. This method prepares students for tests by using recall, workbooks, and independent seat work activities. The objective of traditional education is to offer students a broad foundation of information, based on facts and figures, that will be retained for future application (Hayes, 1999).

The holistic-oriented approach encourages children to interact with literature in the world around them. By reading books and creating their own stories and books, it is hoped that reading and writing will present a whole framework or system with which to foster children's literacy development (Strickland, 1997/1998).

Finally, the thematic approach involves linking all areas of the curriculum into one topical unit of study. The unit themes are broad to accommodate the inclusion of literacy learning across all subject areas (Roberts & Kellough, 1996).

The widespread use of divergent teaching methods may be one aspect of the nationwide concern of the problems of reading and writing achievement. Traditional teaching methods such as isolating skills and stressing drill does not engage student interest, nor does it afford chances for the students to succeed and to develop their self-worth (Patzner & Pettegrew, 1996). Patzner and Pettegrew also questioned the use of holistic literacy to promote language arts achievement for children with special needs because the research and observation in the area of emergent literacy has been based on children with normal developmental histories. They found that many teachers of children with developmental disabilities tend to be uncertain about emphasizing writing with their students.

Shanahan (1997) cautioned against the use of writing to improve reading achievement.

He also stated that the reading-writing connection is a good place to start, but it may not lead to improved learning because although reading and writing do tend to overlap in many of the same cognitive areas, they are still two separate methods of processing information. Shanahan continued to say that it is important to use integrated instruction as a way to achieve specific purposes, not just as an alternative to more traditional methods.

The evidence documented by these researchers indicates that poor self-perception may affect the learning process in relation to reading and writing; therefore, student achievement may be limited. Others feel that lack of reading and writing achievement may be due to discrepancies in the use of any one teaching method in isolation, while still others caution that integration is not a guaranteed answer to improving language arts development.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

In order to document the difficulties students exhibit in reading and writing, which suggests poor language development, the teacher researchers collected data from reading test scores, language arts student surveys, parent surveys, reader self-perception surveys, writer self-perception surveys, and writing samples.

After administration of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading test at Sites A and B and the Nelson Reading Skills test at Site C, these teacher researchers obtained data regarding their classrooms' reading achievement. The teacher researchers' definition of underachievers for the reporting of the data is "those students who are currently reading one or more years below their grade level."

Of the 22 students in the class at Site A, 19 were involved in academic testing. (Three of these students are non-English speaking students and were not tested at this time.) All 24 students in the class at Site B were tested. Eight of the 10 students in the class at Site C were also tested. Individual classroom records were developed by the teacher researchers for each site to aid in the recording process. The results of this academic testing are displayed in Figure 1.

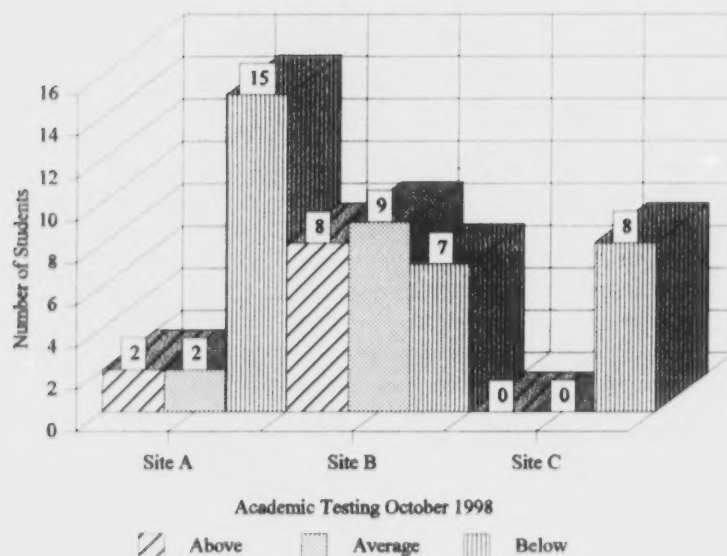


Figure 1. Results of academic testing administered in October 1998.

The findings indicate that 78% of students at Site A could be categorized as underachievers in reading. It was also found that 29% of the students at Site B may also be underachievers in reading. At Site C, 100% of the students tested are reading far below their actual grade levels. These students represent the special education population described in Chapter 1 of this research paper. A number of students who participated in the reading test performed poorly in the area of reading comprehension.

Henk and Melnick (1995) developed the Reader Self-Perception Scale (RSPS) as an instrument to measure the way readers appraise themselves. They based this assessment on Bandura's theory of perceived self-efficacy, or judgment of one's ability to perform an activity.

Henk and Melnick explained the way an individual feels about himself or herself as a reader could clearly influence whether reading would be sought or avoided, the amount of effort that would occur during reading, and how persistently comprehension would be pursued.

Four sources of information are assessed in this scale. Progress (PR) defines how one's perception of present reading performance compares with past performance. Observational Comparison (OC) deals with how a child perceives his or her reading performance compared to that of classmates. Social Feedback (SF) assesses direct or indirect input about reading from teachers, classmates, and family members. Finally, the Physiological State (PS) refers to internal feelings that the child experiences during reading. There is a natural overlap among all four categories as they all tend to interact with one another when one is considering the specifics for self-evaluation purposes.

For the purpose of assessing students' feelings about themselves, the RSPS was administered to the students at all three sites in this study (see Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5).

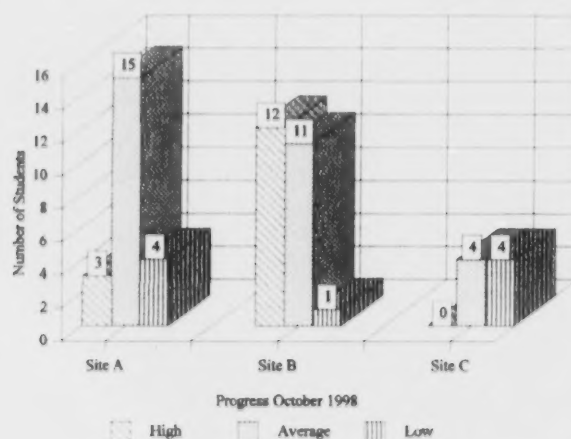


Figure 2. Reader self-perception interpretation of Progress in October 1998.

Figure 2 shows the results in the area of Progress on the Reader Self-Perception Scale. The teacher researchers found that at least 50% of the students at each site felt they were making some progress in the area of reading. However, there is concern for those students who fall in the low range. These students need continuous interventions to help maintain their interest in learning and improving. These results have great importance because a student who feels that he/she is not making progress will, in all likelihood, make little or no progress in the future.

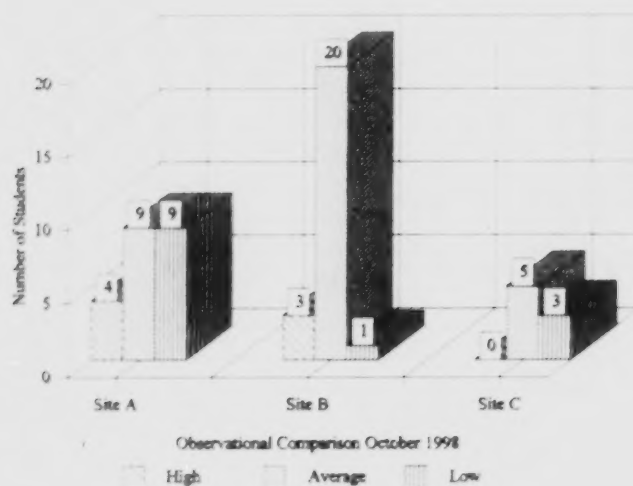


Figure 3. Reader self-perception interpretation of Observational Comparison in October 1998

Figure 3 shows the results in the area of Observational Comparison. In comparing their reading performance to their classmates' performance, approximately 60% or more of the students at all sites saw themselves as comparable to their peers. The teacher researchers feel these comparisons are justified because the students most likely compared themselves to their classmates. On the other hand, if comparisons were made with the national total of third/fourth grade and the national total of high school populations, the results may have been quite different.

For example, many students from the high school special education English class at Site C are five to six years below grade level in reading. Even though the majority perceived themselves as average in the area of Observational Comparison, this is not a true comparison to their age-level peers.

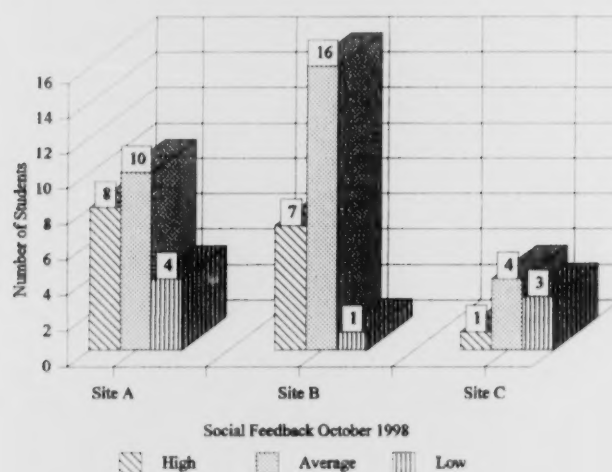


Figure 4. Reader self-perception interpretation of Social Feedback in October 1998.

In Figure 4, the results in the area of Social Feedback are displayed. It was found that at least 62.5% of the students at each site felt they receive positive input about their reading abilities from peers and significant adults. Again, at Site B, only one student scored low in this area. The teacher researchers feel this category is important, especially for those who fall in the low range area of Social Feedback. Similarly, as in Figure 2, these are the students who might benefit from interventions and recognition for their efforts.

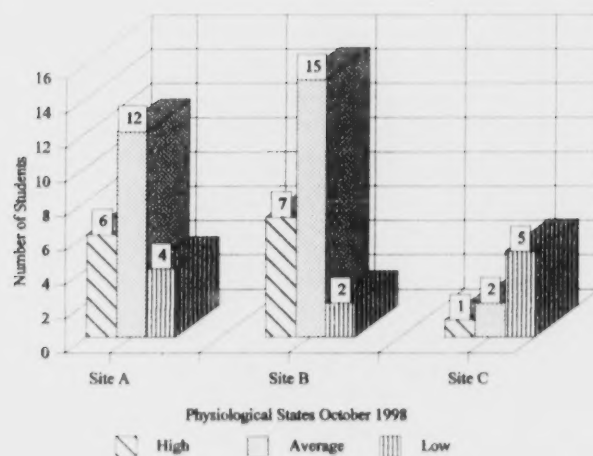


Figure 5. Reader self-perception interpretation of Physiological States in October 1998.

Figure 5 displays the results in the area of Physiological States, or internal feelings experienced during reading. At Sites A and B, at least 80% of the students surveyed had positive feelings when reading. In comparison, 62.5% of the high school special education students assessed at Site C have negative feelings when reading is involved. The teacher researchers feel the students at Sites A and B are expressing honest feelings when it comes to reading. At the third/fourth grade levels, reading is still exciting for the children and they really appear to enjoy reading even though some reading is done through pictures.

In contrast, at the high school level, Site C, where many of the students are reading below grade level, reading becomes an undesirable chore. The students have difficulty with vocabulary and length of text. Thus, they cannot read, or they will not read. The purpose for reading at the high school level mainly involves reading for knowledge and not for enjoyment.

By using the Reader Self-Perception Scale (RSPS) developed by Henk and Melnick (1995), these teacher researchers were able to make general assessments of their classrooms' reading climates. The RSPS was given as an assessment to provide a profile of student perceptions about themselves and their reading abilities. The response options were discussed with each class beforehand. This was a teacher-read activity. Enough time was given for individuals to respond. As the results were tallied, students were then classified according to high, average, and low reading self-perceivers. These data could indicate possible factors of negative orientations toward reading. Marshall and Weinstein (1984) suggested these four basic categories overlap and influence one another. They also added that these interactions suggest the notion that literacy learning is both complex and social. Children learn about themselves as readers by interacting in the home, classroom, and other social contexts where reading is involved. These interactions enable children to see personal growth and progress.

Overall, the reading survey results tend to show the students generally felt satisfied about themselves as readers. However, when looking at the reading achievement test scores, the majority of the students at Sites A and C are at least one year below grade level.

When comparing the actual achievement to the perception of achievement, the discrepancies may be bothersome to those who view the results. The teacher researchers have made reference as to why they feel these discrepancies exist in the narratives following each related figure. Furthermore, the results are understandable, yet disturbing, since the students are in an environment that is considered appropriate for their needs. The teacher researchers see this

as a dangerous situation because the future may be bleak for students who think they are achieving at a higher level than they really are. The students have false impressions regarding their actual abilities and may face unexpected challenges in the real world.

The teacher researchers also chose to administer the Writer Self-Perception Scale (WSPS) developed by Bottomley, Henk, and Melnick (1997/1998) to the targeted students at Sites A, B, and C. The WSPS was designed for similar reasons as the RSPS. The authors of this assessment felt it was important to understand the students' perceptions of themselves as writers to determine individual needs of students when writing activities are used.

The WSPS assesses five sources of information regarding students' feelings about themselves in relation to written activities. General Progress (GP) and Specific Progress (SP) are defined as how one's perception of present writing performance compares with past achievement. Observational Comparison (OC) deals with how a child perceives his or her writing performance in relation to peers. Social Feedback (SF) assesses direct and indirect input about writing derived from teachers, classmates, and family members. Finally, the Physiological States (PS) refers to internal feelings that the child experiences during writing.

For the purpose of assessing students' feelings about themselves, the WSPS was administered to the students at all three sites in this study. The results for each of the above-mentioned categories assessed by the WSPS are displayed in Figures 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10.

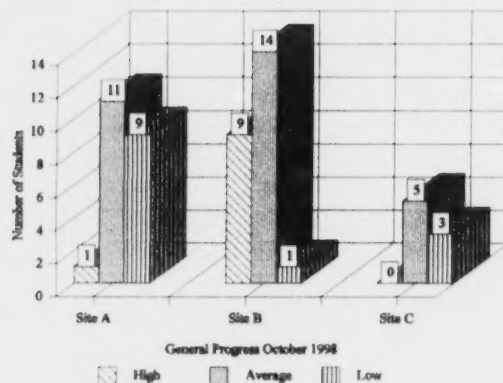


Figure 6. Writer self-perception interpretation of General Progress in October 1998.

Figure 6 shows the results in the area of General Progress on the Writer Self-Perception Scale. The teacher researchers found that over 50% of the students at each site felt they were making overall progress in the area of writing.

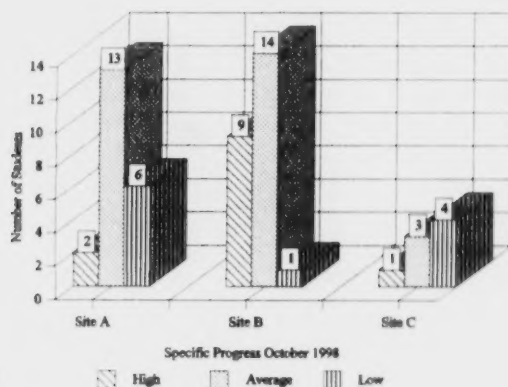


Figure 7. Writer self-perception interpretation of Specific Progress in October 1998.

Figure 7 shows that at least 50% of the students at each program site felt they were progressing in specific areas of writing, such as clarity, organization, style, etc.

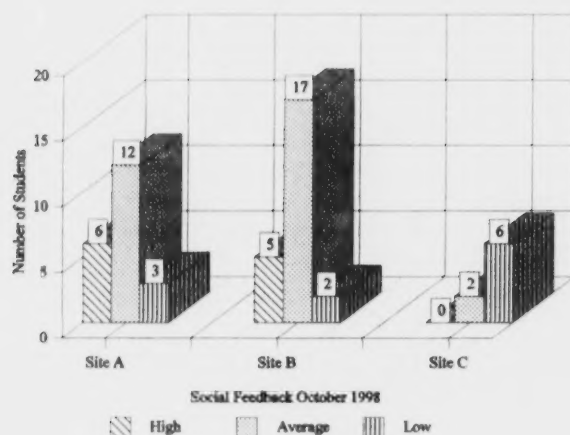


Figure 8. Writer self-perception interpretation of Social Feedback in October 1998.

The results in the area of Social Feedback are displayed in Figure 8. Although the results of the survey from Sites A and B were positive, 75% of the students at Site C perceived themselves as poor writers based on the feedback from their peers, family members, and teachers.

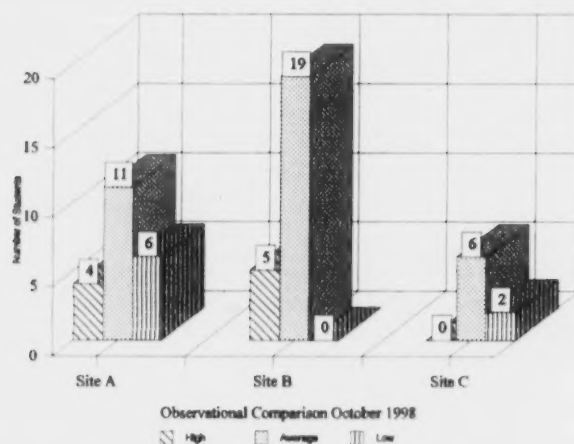


Figure 9. Writer self-perception interpretation of Observational Comparison in October 1998.

In the area of Observational Comparison, all students at Site B, perceived themselves as equal or better than their peers in writing skills. Although at least 70% of the students at Sites A and C felt comfortable with their writing skills in comparison with their peers, there were a number of students who exhibited negative or inferior thoughts about their writing capabilities.

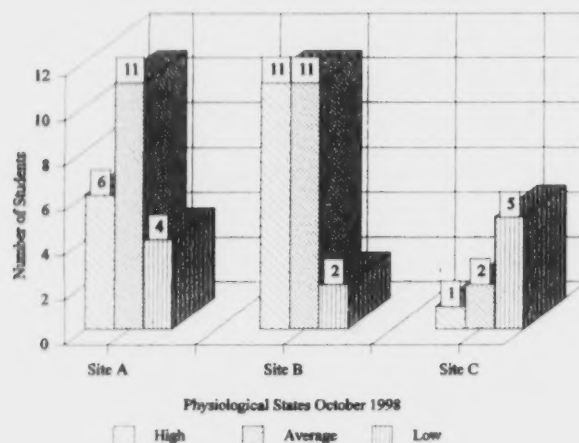


Figure 10. Writer self-perception interpretation of Physiological States in October 1998.

According to the survey, several students at each site did not enjoy activities involving writing. Over 60% of the students at Site C preferred to avoid writing altogether.

By using the Writer Self-Perception Scale (WSPS), developed by Bottomley, Henk, and Melnick (1997/1998), these teacher researchers were able to make general assessments of their classrooms' writing climates. The WSPS was given as an assessment that provided a profile of the students' perceptions about themselves and their writing abilities. The response options were discussed with the classes beforehand. This was a teacher-read activity. Enough time was given for individuals to respond. As the results were tallied, students were then classified according to high, average, and low writing self-perceivers. These data could indicate possible factors to

negative orientations toward writing. Marshall and Weinstein (1984) suggested these five categories overlap and influence one another. These interactions suggest the notion that literacy is both complex and social. Children learn about themselves as writers by interacting in the home, classroom, and other social contexts where writing is involved. These interactions enable children to see personal growth and progress.

The teacher researchers at Sites A, B, and C chose to administer both the RSPS and the WSPS as part of the baseline data collection process in order to gain a better view of the students' perceptions of themselves as readers and writers. As the results were tallied, students were classified according to high, average, and low self-perceivers. These data could indicate possible factors to negative orientations toward reading and writing.

Since the emotional factor is an area that concerns reading development, additional data collection activities were given at the study sites. A language arts student survey was read to the children by the teacher researchers. At the elementary level, each statement was read orally. The response items were in picture form and the students were able to choose "very positive," "positive," "poor," or "very poor." At the high school level, each statement was also read orally; however, the response items were written in words. The results of this survey from each site can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1

Language Arts Attitude Survey September 1998

Statement How do you feel about...	Very Positive			Positive			Poor			Very Poor		
	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
Reading a book at home during free time	12	7	0	5	13	5	1	2	0	1	2	3
Receiving a book for a gift	10	15	0	5	9	3	4	0	4	0	0	1
Parent reading you a book before going to bed	9	9	0	3	2	3	0	3	3	7	10	2
Reading in front of classmates	1	8	1	8	5	3	5	5	3	5	5	1
Reading a book to a younger child	11	12	3	2	7	2	5	4	2	1	1	1
Reading the newspaper	3	5	2	9	6	2	1	3	1	6	10	3
Being asked to have a book talk with a friend	6	7	1	9	8	3	2	5	2	2	4	2
Going to the library	11	18	2	1	6	3	2	0	2	5	0	1
Teacher assigning a book to read	8	7	1	5	8	2	4	6	3	2	3	2
Reading out loud with a partner	5	11	0	7	7	3	1	4	4	6	2	1
Not knowing a word in a book	2	3	0	9	6	1	4	8	3	4	7	4
Giving an oral book report	7	6	1	6	9	0	5	4	5	1	5	2
Teacher calling on you to answer a question in class	13	17	0	5	6	3	1	1	4	0	0	1
Speaking in front of classmates	2	10	1	3	7	1	7	2	5	7	5	1
Needing to ask the teacher a question	12	9	0	5	13	6	2	1	0	0	1	2

At the elementary level, the majority of students at Sites A and B enjoyed reading-related activities. Some examples were reading a book at home during free time, reading a book to a younger child, and going to the library. Another noticeable response was that almost 100% of the students at Sites A and B felt positive or very positive when called upon by the teacher during class.

Upon looking at the responses from the high school students with special needs at Site C, it appeared that most of these students had developed a negative outlook toward reading. For instance, they did not look upon receiving a book as a welcome gift, nor did they appreciate being assigned a book to read. Also, they showed a tendency to dislike activities involving oral expression.

There were two areas found to be similar at all three sites. The first area was those students who felt poorly when they did not know a new word in context. On a more positive note, almost all students at each site felt comfortable when there was a need to ask the teacher a question.

Finally, a reading survey was sent to the parents of the students involved in the research baseline data collection. This survey can be viewed in Appendix A. Initially, the survey was given to gain insight as to the reading and writing habits practiced in the home.

Probable Causes

"Read in order to live."
Gustave Flaubert in a letter to
Mlle de Chantepie, June 1857

Reading is common to all of us. It is done in a variety of ways: astronomers read stars, architects read the land before building, zoologists read animal signs, dancers read music, parents read the signs on their children's faces for joy or fright. From the fisherman, who reads the ocean currents, to the farmer, who reads the weather in the sky, reading is practiced worldwide (Manguel, 1996).

Societies of long ago recorded their activities of daily living. These showed that reading preceded writing. They needed to recognize their systems of signs before putting them down on a page (p. 7).

As stated by Manguel (p. 7), reading is at the beginning of the social contract. Experiences in reading can come through books, magazines, newspapers, and other materials that have letters combined to make words. If letters and their combinations have not been learned, reading will become difficult and frustrating. As one gains positive experiences while learning to read, it is possible to venture into adventures of fact and fiction. Reading can be a private or individual activity or can involve others who have the same interests. For small children, being read to can become a favorite pastime, a pleasant experience before going to sleep.

As a child grows and gains first hand experience with reading, the child's reading skills will build upon what has been previously read. Therefore, it could be said that the act of reading becomes a history in and of itself. In "The White Castle," as cited by Manguel (p. 23), Orhan

Pamuk said, "but if you have a book in your hand, no matter how complex or difficult to understand, when you have finished it, you can, if you wish, go back to the beginning, read it again, and thus understand that which is difficult, and, with it, understand life as well" (p. 23).

Unfortunately for many students, this is not the typical scenario. Frenier (1996) reports that frequently teachers hear statements such as "I don't like to read" and "I've never read a whole book." Children with reading difficulties tend to read more slowly. They are less able to identify the written language. Comprehension skills are based on what is written. Insecure backgrounds that create mental images and concept building may not be fully developed. Research indicates that students have difficulty answering the most basic questions, such as those involving literal comprehension. According to Boyle and Yeager (1997), at-risk students and those with disabilities usually do not respond to the traditional techniques used in general education practices.

A study was conducted by the National Institute of Education in which Anderson (1985) observed that high school students who do not read well are often at risk for failure and for dropping out of school. Kletzien and Hushion (1992) also added that for most of these students, academic reading is done with great reluctance and leisure reading is often avoided completely. Thus, underachievement in reading continues into adulthood and may negatively influence the next generation of readers.

There is no single factor that leads to underachievement in reading. According to the latest update from the Family Learning Association (1998), there are four causes of underachievement in reading. These four areas include environmental, intellectual, physical, and emotional factors.

The first area, environmental factors, consists of home, school, and culture. The early literacy experiences the child is exposed to in the home may greatly affect the child's future attitudes and performances in the areas of reading and language. Research from the University of Maine (1998) indicated that those children who are most likely to take advantage of classroom reading instruction enter school having over 1,000 hours of storybook reading, watching Sesame Street with caregivers, and playing word and computer games. In contrast, it was also found that those children entering school with as few as 25 hours of storybook reading and less than 200 hours of word play and other literacy related experiences will need extra instructional time in order to meet their individual needs regardless of the quality of classroom reading instruction.

Riley (1996) expressed his concern that in some homes, the adults present do not possess the skills to read a note sent home from school, let alone the skills to read to their children. Children who are not exposed to positive literacy experiences, such as being read to, seeing their parents read, or having print materials available, may fail to realize the importance of reading in their daily lives. Children learn from the models around them, whether negative or positive. For example, in homes where the TV guide is the only form of reading material available, children may be less likely to include reading as a priority in their lives.

The Family Learning Association (1998) stated the school environment also plays an active role in the students' reading attitudes and achievements. Upon entering school, if the early literacy experiences are not treated in a positive way, a student may assume a negative attitude that could be irreversible. Impressions are formed from the first day of school as to what learning entails and what the child can expect in the future. Any negative experience may trigger a negative impression in any child.

The teaching styles utilized by today's classroom teachers are also contributing factors to the school environment. First, some teachers still tend to depend on one traditional method regardless of individual student needs. According to a study related to staff development, Joyce and Showers (1995) found about ten percent of teachers in the study actually push away opportunities for growth. These teachers may be hindering the possibilities for growth of those students who may need a more diverse learning experience.

On the other side of the spectrum, when too many different teaching styles are used haphazardly, the students may become overwhelmed and frustrated. All too often, new techniques are introduced through staff development without sufficient training and support to implement these new strategies effectively in the classroom. Joyce and Showers (p. 113) also stated that the lack of essential elements of staff development leads to poor transfer which, in effect, may reflect poorly on student achievement instead of enhancing it.

In addition to home and school, cultural and societal differences may also affect a child's reading and language achievement. A child's cultural background may present some unique difficulties when addressing reading and language. For example, in schools today, many students enrolled do not speak, write, nor understand English when used as the primary language. Carbo (1996) suggested that many students with a limited command of English may fall through the cracks in language learning programs. Moreover, language loses its effect as the needs for interpretation and translation increase.

Another cultural challenge may center around the actual importance of education. Some people of Asian and Mexican-American heritage may continue to follow traditional beliefs. In some cultures, education is not a priority for those who live in the rural villages. According to the

Ministry of Education in China as cited by Beaupré (1997). Asian countries follow the thoughts of Sun Yat-sen and Confucius and view social education and vocational training as a means of cultivating the appropriate ideas and behaviors compatible with building a modern economy. Beaupré further explained that there are margin groups, including the illiterate, who have little or no useful access to any programs. Recently, the Ministry of Education in China has adopted the policy of requiring children to attend school for at least nine years, however, the teaching of values and virtues remains a priority. Feng (1994) stated that it is important to identify culturally appropriate educational practices to use with Asian children, since they have different origins, ecological adaptations, and histories. Feng also expressed concern that the challenge of schooling may be overwhelming. American schooling may contradict the cultural system. Many Asian parents do not understand the American school system because of cultural differences and language barriers.

Krashen (1998) studied the Hispanic population. He felt low English language ability, poverty, and family factors were negative elements in the education of Hispanics. Children of poverty typically live in environments with few books.

The second area, intellectual factors, reflects on intelligence. A lack of intelligence may cause underachievement in reading as well as in other aspects of education. Students who have learning disabilities and students with mental impairments, such as cognitive delay, comprise a great part of this group of learners. Differences in reading levels may not be as defined in the early school years. However, by the time these students reach high school, a very prominent difference of three or more years below grade level in reading comprehension skills may be plausible (Family Learning Association, 1998).

Unfortunately, current school systems appear to expect this failure from a certain percentage of their students. Thus, the result is poor achievement in the area of language development. Slavin (1996) stated that beyond the strong language programs provided in kindergarten and first grade, a number of children will fail to learn to read. These children are likely to be retained, be assigned to long-term remedial services, or labeled as having learning disabilities.

In addition to the environmental and intellectual factors, the Family Learning Association (1998) noted that physical factors comprise the third area which may lead to underachievement in reading. Visual and auditory problems are commonly found in this area. Early eye and ear examinations and screenings may detect problems that can be addressed using the appropriate corrective devices. In more severe cases, special placement may be necessary to provide alternative methods and materials appropriate to the individual's needs. There is a high proportion of students who have visual and/or hearing impairments with additional disabilities. A special curriculum may need to be developed that will fit these needs. According to a 1995 policy statement, the American Academy of Optometry and the American Optometric Association believed the degree to which visual and hearing impairments affect development depends on the type of loss, the severity of the loss, age of onset, intellectual ability, and environmental experiences. Without additional help, these children will not have the motivation to learn.

The final area, emotional factors, can be addressed as either a cause or effect of underachievement in reading. The proverbial question of which came first - the chicken or the egg - is apparent here. Do emotional problems lead to underachievement in reading, or does underachievement in reading lead to emotional problems?

Both sides of the question are important in the development of reading. Emotional factors may affect early reading progress when younger children are so distracted by their problems that they are unable to concentrate in the classroom. Important basic skills needed for learning to read may be missed due to emotional concerns or stressful situations. The building blocks of reading are missed, leading to future reading problems (Family Learning Association, 1998).

Too often, though, emotional factors are a result of underachievement or failure. Children in this situation may feel ignored or out of place in school. Stress builds as differences become more apparent and reading becomes a burden. These students may see themselves as failures and begin to form negative feelings about reading. These negative feelings, in turn, lead to further problems with achievement. Lack of involvement in reading or the avoidance of reading altogether may be the result for children in this situation (Cooney & Ferguson).

In summary, the teacher researchers found through a review of the literature that underachievement in reading may be a result of many factors. Environmental, intellectual, physical, and emotional factors comprise the four main areas which may affect achievement in reading. Children who have difficulties in any one or more of these areas may demonstrate poor skills in the area of language development. This lack of development in language skills will most likely affect the rest of their educational experiences as well as their transition into adulthood.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

Upon a review of the literature, the teacher researchers have divided the solution strategies for developing language arts skills into several sub-categories: the use of the multiple intelligences theory, choices for reading, technology, cooperative learning, parent involvement, using a thematic/integrated approach, direct instruction, graphic organizers, and writing activities. The researchers have also found that overlapping occurs among the many strategies to be discussed. When combining these strategies, a literacy-rich environment will be created and will provide opportunities for writing, reading, speaking, and listening.

Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences has sparked a series of changes in many of the ways that today's educators view and deliver instruction. His theory suggests that there is no one single, fixed intelligence. The Theory of Multiple Intelligences is one method of instruction that can be used to improve the literacy and learning of today's students. During an interview with Educational Leadership, Gardner stated, "What I argue against is the notion that there is only one way to learn how to read" (as cited in Checkley, 1997). He further stated that it does not make sense to teach everything in all eight ways, but that everything can be taught in more than one single way.

One program, Reading Styles, embraces the multiple intelligences theory as the basis of the instructional methods used to teach reading and writing. The forerunners of this program have found through research that it is the instructional methodology and materials used that play the biggest role in improving reading (Barber & Carbo, 1994). Even deeper than the fact that each individual has different abilities and learning strengths and weaknesses, this program embraces differences, strengths, and weaknesses to accommodate the individual's reading styles.

In order to teach each individual to read, Carbo recommended the first step in the Reading Styles program is to identify the learner's strengths and weaknesses. This is done through observation techniques and the Reading Styles Inventory (RSI). The RSI outlines each individual's strengths and weaknesses and the methods that would be most successful in teaching this individual how to read. Next, by adapting curriculum to include a particular student's reading style, improvement in reading can be seen (Carbo, 1996).

The Reading Styles Program focuses on six different reading styles, similar to Gardner's eight intelligences: visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic, global, and analytic. According to Carbo and her Reading Styles Program, there are specific activities that may benefit learners with the following reading styles. Students with strengths in the visual style learn to read best with sight methods, silent reading, and videos as well as other visual media. Phonics strategies, choral reading, and discussing stories are a few of the methods used with auditory learners. Students with a kinesthetic acuity can find success in activities using pantomiming, dramatics, or doing physical activity while reading. Students with a global style can learn well through holistic reading methods, such as recorded books, story writing, and choral reading. A few of the

strategies used with analytic thinkers are auditory phonics, programmed materials, and puzzles. Finally, tactile learners learn to read best with writing and tracing methods, or building something using written instruction (p. 11).

Reading Styles is one program that uses components of the multiple intelligences theory as the basis of how to teach children to read. Overall, Carbo (p. 13) claimed that educators need to use a wide variety of instructional techniques and adapt those to students' strengths and weaknesses in order to build smooth running reading programs with engaged learners.

One popular element of many of the different methods of teaching reading is to teach children to read by using different choices for reading. This element of reading has been mentioned in the integrated method and Carbo's Reading Styles method, amongst others. The premise of using different choices for reading is built upon the notion that the modeling process is extremely important for beginning readers. Beginning with choices for reading that utilize teacher modeling, and then using methods that gradually encourage increased student reading can lead to stronger, independent reading skills (p. 10).

There are several choices for reading that have been found effective in teaching children to read. Carbo (p. 10) explicitly explains several choices for reading that are used in the Reading Styles Program. The choices described are in order of increasing student independence. The best modeling process to be used when teaching children to read is the teacher read-aloud. Another choice is shared reading in which the teacher uses an enlarged book, pointing to the words as the children listen. Recorded books have been a popular aspect of many programs in which a student follows along with a tape-recorded version of a story. After a few readings, the children are encouraged to join in with the reading of the story. When using echo reading, the teacher reads

aloud a portion of the story, then the children read back the same portion. Choral reading can be used with small groups of students who read aloud a passage in unison. When engaging in paired reading, two students take turns reading aloud a story. Guided reading is a reading choice in which the teacher works with a child or group of children as they read a text, guiding along the way through questioning, showing them how to use pictures, and teaching the students different skills to monitor their reading.

Finally, the last choice for reading, the ultimate goal for all readers, is Silent Sustained Reading (SSR). Worthy, Turner, and Moorman (1998) believed that the highest levels of reading competence can be found by reading in areas of personal interest. They also related that the most important aspect of SSR is that the students choose their own reading materials. Carson found that time spent reading self-selected materials in school led to positive feelings about reading and improved student achievement (as cited in Worthy et al., p. 296). Of course, silent reading of self-selected materials will not stand alone as a reading curriculum; it must be coupled with skills instruction. Students who participate in free reading programs at school are more likely to read outside of school (Pilgreen & Krashen as cited in Worthy et al., p. 297).

By using different choices for reading, a teacher can model the reading process, and then introduce different choices for reading to increase student independence and foster independent reading. All of these choices for reading are intended to supplement reading programs to enhance reading and should be used in conjunction with reading skills instruction (p. 297).

Technology is another strategy that educators could use to improve the reading and writing connection. There is a need for learning how to learn. By the year 2000, students will face an increasing demand to learn and relearn. According to Fogarty and Bellanca (1992), the ever changing high-tech revolution suggests the need for a more purposeful focus on the use of our multiple intelligences.

Learning how to make choices is also very important. Fogarty and Bellanca further mentioned that educators must decide how they will use hardware and software as learning tools in the classroom (p. 22). Through the use of the computer, elementary children are able to master basic skills. In high school, software can help in developing writing skills. Schools can save the money normally used on workbooks and expensive textbooks that quickly become outdated. Plans can be made to purchase the technology packages that will make computer uses possible.

Even though technology is a fairly new form of educating children, it can provide ways for many students to gain access to knowledge. Fogarty and Bellanca also found that this new multimedia approach may enable our ordinary students to gain an understanding that may have been accessible only in the extraordinary classroom a few years ago (p.22).

Technology - computer programs, audio tapes, video tapes, talking books, and the Internet - is available to reach a greater proportion of students with a variety of intellectual strengths and styles. This new field, however, does not necessarily improve education, for children tend to spend too much time with games and non-educational activities. The new technologies available can become a valuable education tool only if they are used properly (Veenema & Gardner, 1996).

Today, many families have home computers or have access to the use of one. Most schools have computer classes. Some classrooms have their own personal computers, printers, and tape recorders available for the students to use. The many types of technology that are now on the market should be used as teaching machines to assist classroom instruction (Tapscott, 1999).

MacArthur (1996) cited a study compiled in 1993 by MacArthur, Graham, and Schwartz who researched the writing achievement of students with learning disabilities (LD). They found that computers can support writing by students who have learning difficulties. Computers are flexible writing tools that can enhance the writing process. Instructional programs that provide meaningful writing tasks, and instruction in the writing process can improve writing achievement.

MacArthur (p. 344) believed that many children are reluctant to write. One reason is that on writing assignments, spelling becomes difficult and often times students cannot read what they have written. Word processing is one technique that can be used to reinforce and strengthen the skills of slow learners and those with disabilities. By using word processors and speech synthesizers, students are able to select and check words rather than become frustrated with their own spelling. Written materials are now legible and include correct mechanics. Students are able to plan, write, and revise materials which helps with their social skills as confidence and self-esteem become more evident. These media help writing and therefore support reading.

There are advantages for many students who use word processors (p. 345). They are able to see as well as read their projects, thus getting instant feedback. The teacher is able to model as well as intervene when necessary. By typing their assignments, students find their work becomes

neater. Most students will find they are able to write in many different ways, such as letters, signs, posters, and making books, to name a few. Children can learn word processing in order to compose, write, and type projects in addition to journaling. However, there are some disadvantages associated with word processing skills. The first is in the typing itself. Children must take the time to learn typewriting skills. Also, they must learn the proper ways to use the word processor and the speech synthesizer (p. 352, 353).

In addition to word processing, other multimedia applications are now being made available. There are programs on today's market for elementary school children such as Kid Pix (1992) and Kid Works 2 (1992) that allow children to create pictures using drawing tools and then to write their stories to accompany their pictures. The series Explore-a-Science (1993) can be used to enhance thematic curriculum activities. Leahy (1991) cited Butzin who described Writing to Read as another computer based instructional program designed to develop the writing and reading skills of kindergarten and first grade students. It is organized around work stations and is set up in the computer lab. Children spend approximately one hour per day in the lab, changing stations every fifteen to twenty minutes for a semester. This program is also aimed to motivate at-risk children. However, Slavin (1990) concluded that this is an expensive program from IBM and does not include the cost of teacher training, security, maintenance, or instructional aides. In addition, Slavin believed that this takes up a lot of time as well. But when it comes to whether children will fail if they do not learn to read well, the program would be well worth its cost in money, time, and effort. Goals must be redesigned and programs must be restructured for success.

MacArthur (1996) cited Daiute who felt that older students can benefit from the many visual media. These media enable students with limited English or a different cultural or linguistic background to succeed in the classroom. Through the use of multimedia, these students may become motivated to write more and to find new ways to express themselves.

Educational programs on CDs, audio books, videos, and the use of the Internet are more examples of new technology available to today's students. Children are listening more frequently to books on tape and audio books as well as viewing stories presented on videos. The Disney Corporation is an example of a company that has recorded several audio books to accompany familiar story books. Children can follow and read along as they listen to the tapes. The Growler tapes are non-traditional. The stories are not read. Children figure out what is happening just by listening. These programs are used mainly as enrichment activities (Internet). The American Printing House for the Blind in Kentucky and the Services for the Visually Impaired in Illinois are two of the many agencies that supply books on tape for students who are visually impaired. These agencies will also send books on tape to schools that apply for their special needs children. These books enable physically challenged as well as slow learners to keep up with classroom activities. The use of audio and video material create exciting adventures. Children develop their creativity and imagination skills. Listening skills improve as children learn to see with their ears. Motivation increases for all, especially for the students who have been categorized as at risk (MacArthur, 1996).

Finally, the Internet can be integrated into today's classroom enabling students to do research, create web sites, collaborate on projects, and use writing skills through E-mail activities. The publishing of writing through E-mail would promote a greater awareness of the process of reading and writing among students (p. 10).

An article from the November 1997 issue of *Educational Leadership* discussed critical factors that today's children face. One of the most serious problems in working with students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds is their lack of prior knowledge and experience. By the time students are in the middle grades, they have been exposed to meaningless exercises (busy work) and are no longer interested in print materials. The Orange County Literacy Project in Florida was a joint effort between middle school students in Orange County, Florida and Peabody College of Vanderbilt University (Hasselbring, Going, Taylor, Bottge, & Daley, 1997). This project combined computer technology, literacy instruction, and small class sizes to help students develop skills and confidence needed to have success in their classrooms. The students in this project share common problems with the students in this research study. All are young people with reading and writing difficulties. They are from both English and non-English speaking backgrounds. Many students in both groups exhibit low self-esteem and discipline problems (p. 30).

Children need repetition to retain information that is being taught in the classroom (Boyle & Yeager, 1997). Computer-based programs, audio tapes that encourage students to read along, listening to books on tape, and watching videos that will generate a new field of literacy to accompany familiar as well as enrichment stories may also be used with students to enhance their literacy development (Hasselbring et al., 1997).

Parents often are concerned about the success or lack of success their children have when it comes to reading and writing. As mentioned in chapter 2, the home environment helps to shape and motivate children to want to read and write. A recent issue of Education Week on the Web (1998) stated most children are in the classroom for only a portion of the day, five days a week, nine months a year. Young children need environments that will support early literacy development. Children must come to school with a motivation to learn to read. Parents need to help their children by getting involved in school-related activities. In a 1996 press release, U.S. Secretary of Education Riley felt that positive results in achievement will be seen when we start spending more time at home with the television off, reading to our children, having them read to us, and encouraging them to express themselves in writing more.

Howard (1996) also had suggestions that could be helpful to parents. She stated that parents can become active partners in their children's reading and writing activities by taking time to look at writing folders, where parents themselves can read and respond in writing. Parents can form better ideas about how their children read and write, as well as learning what strengths and weaknesses their children have. But, would parents take time from their personal schedules to do this? An editorial article on parent involvement from Education Week on the Web (1998) pointed out that schools across the country are trying everything they can do to get parents more actively involved in their children's education. Even so, parents face more demands on their own time, more competition for children's attention, and economic burdens that force some parents to work and limit time they can spend with their children.

At the same time, there are signs that connecting schools and families can be made stronger (p. 2). Teachers can help parents by giving them suggestions on what to do at home.

Ideas can be given to parents through conferencing, notes home, and phone calls. Creating a positive parent/teacher/student climate is important in order for all to achieve success. Students will learn that by accepting parent viewpoints they can take on more responsibility for their own reading and writing and work to improve. Bos (as cited by Smith & Sensenbaugh, 1992) stated parents need to intervene with the reading comprehension skills, especially if their children are slower readers. Parents can become more involved with their children's reading by helping with vocabulary and asking questions as to what is being read or written.

According to Carnine and Kinder (as cited by Smith & Sensenbaugh, p. 3), parents can use strategies such as pictures, physical actions, demonstrations, and practicing new words to help children gain confidence in reading and writing. Slow readers and children with reading disabilities can benefit as long as parents keep a positive attitude and select materials that accommodate their child's learning speeds and needs. The child needs to feel loved and appreciated as an individual, whatever the difficulties in school may be. For children to be successful, they need to become aware of their learning strengths, while working to strengthen lagging areas (Webb as cited in Smith & Sensenbaugh, p. 4).

Cooperative learning is an additional strategy that involves teamwork. Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences reminds educators that children learn through a variety of ways. Students are different. The differences show up when students work in groups, and because of these differences, there is a need to cooperate and get along with each other. Cooperative learning can

be a useful tool as both teacher and students work together. Bellanca and Fogarty (1991) defined cooperative learning as an instructional strategy that uses cooperative groups as a tool for creating a more cooperative classroom in which student achievement, self-esteem, responsibility, high-level thinking, and favorable attitudes toward school increase dramatically.

The teacher's role is moving from the traditional teaching methods to the cooperative thinking classroom. For example, traditional methods emphasized teacher-student and student-material interactions, preparing students for tests by using recall, using workbooks and handing out information to be done independently by the students. Social skills are not stressed and students are responsible only for themselves. In cooperative learning, there is a balance of teacher-to-student, student-to-material and student-to-student interactions. In addition to teaching students how to learn, active learning is taking place by building responsibility, giving encouragement and motivation through the use of teamwork, and the sharing of knowledge. Social skills are taught, roles are shared and mixed, and students rely on each other (p. 3).

There are many forms of cooperative learning now in use. The John Hopkins University (Internet) has developed and researched various methods of cooperative learning. The basic idea of cooperative learning techniques is to encourage children to learn by working in small, structured groups or teams. There are several purposes in grouping children in today's classroom. By working together, children are helping one another learn. They gain in achievement and self-esteem. Respect for their classmates improves. It is easier to learn when working with someone else. The university research compared cooperative learning methods to traditional methods. The outcomes are very interesting. They found that cooperative learning enhanced academic achievement for high, average, and low achievers. It also improved social relations in the

classroom, a greater acceptance of mainstreamed students, improved attitudes among children toward subject matter, and improved time-on-task. Finally, there was a noted improvement in the students' self-esteem.

Winograd and Gaskins (1992) cited Webb who stated that cooperative learning enables students to give and receive help from their peers, which leads to higher achievement and lowered anxieties. It also allows students to listen to each other's thinking, organize and share their own thinking, and build on common experiences. Students are able to understand how others learn and how they have added their own knowledge to the group (Fusco & Fountain, 1992).

Bellanca and Fogarty (1991) reviewed the Johnsons' five elements of cooperative groups. First, there needs to be face-to-face interaction. The physical arrangements of students in small groups enables them to share and to support each other. Second, there is individual accountability as each is responsible for the success of the group by doing an assigned task. Third, students are taught the value of social skills, which enhance the group work. Fourth, the students are brought together by a common goal and group rewards to assist each other in the learning task. The last element is group processing where students can reflect on how well they have worked together and how they can improve their teamwork. This way of grouping in the classroom is nice for teachers who prefer the non-traditional methods of teaching. However, there are drawbacks to this method as well. Extra time is needed to plan the lessons. A teacher who prefers workbooks, absolute quiet and rows of desks will find cooperative learning difficult.

Carol and Joe Utay (1997) also studied the effects of combining peer tutoring, also called peer-assisted learning (PAL), and cooperative learning to improve writing skills of sixth graders

with learning disabilities. They found that the children enjoyed working with partners, partners asked each other for help, partners seemed to be committed to each other with friendships that extended outside the classroom, and teachers noted an overall improvement in the students' attitudes toward writing.

In summary, working cooperatively can make learning fun. Children who are at risk as well as those who are slow learners can benefit from being in a group. They can get assistance from their peers without feeling embarrassed. Reluctant children are more likely to participate. All benefit from ideas that are brought about from working with a partner or in a group. Different forms of tutoring emerge by working within groups, such as reading buddies and having a friend help by offering advice.

Graphic organizers provide another method through which educators may assist their students in organizing important facts they have read. As students complete various graphic organizers, they are practicing recall, writing, and basic outlining skills that can hopefully be transferred to other areas of their lives - both in and out of school.

In essence, Barnekow (1998) said that graphic organizers were once described by a teacher as sophisticated doodles. Graphic organizers provide students with enhanced outlines on which to map their thoughts and ideas in various subject areas. Regardless of how elaborate or simple graphic organizers are, they are based on several key elements.

First, graphic organizers are nearly always appropriate. Since most people tend to think in visual terms, graphic organizers provide a method to portray these thoughts visually (p. vi).

Second, graphic organizers come in many forms. Some of these forms include webs, sequence charts, Venn diagrams, agree-disagree charts, flow charts, and story ladders. This list goes on and on, and many graphic organizers are actually combinations of one another designed to meet the needs of the curriculum at hand (p. vi).

Third, graphic organizers are never right or wrong, only better or worse. There really are no wrong graphic organizers. Some simply do a better job of presenting information than others. With time and practice, educators can design their own graphic organizers, drawing from the variety available, to enhance learning in the classroom (p. vi).

Finally, graphic organizers are concept-driven. The form of the graphic organizer should follow its function. One must remember to choose the appropriate graphic organizer for the purpose at hand. Forcing the use of a graphic organizer into another function will essentially defeat the purpose of its use (p. vi).

Thematic, or integrated, instruction is another technique that may be used to help improve students' skills in the various language arts areas of reading and writing in addition to helping them become more independent thinkers and problem-solvers. Although thematic instruction is known by a wide variety of names (such as interdisciplinary thematic unit, multidisciplinary teaching, integrated studies, etc.), the basic concept behind this approach is the same.

Roberts and Kellough (1996) outlined seven major purposes around which they stated thematic instruction revolves. These purposes include the following points: teach students to become independent problem solvers; involve students in purposeful and meaningful learning; help

students recognize that learning is interrelated; help students follow individual interests; provide situations for students to learn what they need rather than what the curriculum dictates; encourage cooperative groupings and social values; and stress learning as whole and connected as opposed to individual pieces of information with no relation to one another.

According to Roberts and Kellough, the idea of thematic instruction has actually been present since the late 1950's when several science programs for elementary schools emerged in the publishing industry. Similar programs expanded to junior high and high schools during the 1960's. When the whole language movement in language arts gained impetus during the 1980's, more educators began to sit up and take notice, thus leading to the current evolution of thematic instruction.

Although thematic instruction may not be the best approach for every student, teacher, or school, the five levels of thematic instruction may help any educator or institution take advantage of the technique to help enhance the curriculum. The five levels range from the least integrated at Level I through the most integrated, with no discipline boundaries, at Level V. Depending upon the individual teacher's or a collaborative team's comfort levels with this technique, as well as the goals of the curriculum, the actual level of integration will vary (p. 5).

Lipson, Valencia, Wixson, and Peters (1993) also saw integration and thematic teaching as a possible approach based on the ideas stated previously above. In general, they felt that the rationale for such a program in the area of language arts lies with the realization that reading and writing abilities are the main factors in the development of oral language knowledge, listening and

speaking, and life experiences. Such a unit helps provide a focus for both students and the teacher and allows the discovery of connections among the various areas of reading, writing, spelling, and grammar.

Lipson, et al., further added that thematic instruction may also, but does not automatically, provide more quality time by combining several separate curricular areas and eliminating some of the redundancy that may come from fragmented teaching styles. They also stressed the importance of not using thematic teaching as a way to save time. The process involves serious thought and organization in order to truly integrate the areas rather than continue to present material in fragmented forms around a topic.

Shanahan (1997) noticed some benefit in the implementation of integrated instruction, especially in the areas of reading and writing - but only when the goals are fully understood by the teacher undertaking the task. The use of this technique should not be for the sole purpose of simply trying to turn a lesson into a fun activity for the students. The underlying goal must be clearly defined and understood in order for this technique to be beneficial in the areas of reading and writing skills development.

Shanahan additionally reminded us that the teacher must continue to provide equal instructional attention in both reading and writing in order to achieve development in these areas. The need for direct instruction and drill for practice is always a necessary part of learning and should also be incorporated in thematic instruction. Mistakenly, thematic instruction tends to shy away from this area, and, thus, students are not getting the time needed to actually practice those skills necessary for successful reading and writing achievement (p. 18).

Overall, the successful use of integrated instruction seems to be based upon the underlying factors for implementing it into one's classroom or program. There must be very clearly stated outcomes and goals. These outcomes should revolve around the strengths of each of the disciplines to be incorporated into the unit. Thematic instruction should also make the students aware of the connections among the disciplines used and focus their attention on these relationships for further transfer in such units as well as everyday life. Finally, students still require instruction, guidance, and practice in order to learn. This instruction should be worked into thematic instruction in the form of mini-lessons and guided practice and not lost to the relevance of the issue (p. 18).

Direct instruction has been a staple in the classroom for many years. Although initial interest in direct instruction has waned since the 1970's, the supporters of direct instruction have risen to the forefront once again as the back-to-basics appeal of this teaching method has caught the eye of numerous school reform efforts (Duffrin, 1996). Direct instruction, which is based on behavioral psychology and the work of B.F. Skinner, focuses on content-rich curriculum that introduces a subject and expects specific responses from the students (Hayes, 1999).

Generally, the use of direct instruction for the purpose of teaching reading tends to focus on some form of commercially published basal reading program. The teacher follows a prescribed set of lesson plans which encourage the memorization of sight words, the utilization of phonics to sound out unfamiliar words, and the incorporation of basic comprehension skills (who? what? where? when? why?) that often require prescribed answers - leaving little room for deviation or problem-solving techniques. The teacher teaches specific skills lessons and the students practice

these skills individually through written workbook and worksheet exercises. These practice exercises are usually taught in isolation and designed for the purpose of improving skills needed explicitly for the purpose of passing minimum skills tests in reading - often required for advancement to the next grade level (Decker, 1986).

The growing problems of illiteracy and aliteracy (the ability to read, but unwillingness to do so) have brought the direct instruction approach back to the forefront in education. The public demand for a back-to-basics curriculum has grown due to recent legislation in many states requiring minimum competency testing of students (p. 55). The use of direct instruction - in the form of strategic minilessons - combined with other approaches (such as cooperative learning and multiple intelligences) to improve motivation and purpose is still encouraged, but the need for coupling this approach with others must not be overlooked at the expense of satisfying testing measures only (Kletzien & Hushion, 1992, and Janiuk & Shanahan, 1988).

Just as reading is connected with learning, it is connected with writing (Gleason, 1995). Writing is used in many ways: to record information, to organize ideas, to reflect on what is learned in the form of journaling, and to state and explain ideas. What a person writes reflects on how a person reads.

Reading and writing are two closely allied disciplinary partners (Shanahan, 1997). Since reading and writing are so closely related, it seems inherent that reading would improve writing and vice versa. Simply by reading, a child can learn organizational patterns of text. The results of one study done by Smith found that because better readers are more frequent readers, reading must "facilitate an unconscious learning of writing by providing a model for written experiences" (as cited in Dana, Scheffler, Richmond, and Smith, 1991). Integrating reading and writing for

language arts instruction has become a popular, yet at times controversial instructional method. Shanahan stated that an integrated reading and writing approach seems to accommodate all reading styles, but cautioned that the integration must be done appropriately, that integration will not automatically lead to learning (Shanahan, 1997).

Integrating reading and writing for enhanced language arts instruction has been found to have some benefits. Reading and writing relationships are a good place to start and the similarities of reading and writing lead to cross-learning opportunities (p 13). Shanahan felt that experimentation with text organization through writing can have a positive impact on reading comprehension, which can lead to improved motivation. Guthrie, Schafer, and Hutchinson found through research that writing instruction can actually accelerate the acquisition of reading skills (as cited in Riley, 1996). Brooks, as cited by Cobine (1995) found that in addition to having positive effects on reading comprehension, writing instruction has been found to help children to organize and clarify their thoughts.

Shanahan (1997) also found that successful integration does not eliminate the teaching of writing through reading instruction, but actually involves a great deal of attention to the separate disciplines. It has been found that writing instruction can improve reading comprehension and reading can improve writing. Now, the question is how can one successfully integrate the two in order to maximize learning in the area of language arts? There are several writing strategies and programs that have been found through research to benefit the reading and language experience of young children. One common strand among all the strategies to integrate

reading and writing seems to involve the personal connection of the writer himself. Writing must function to a student's life in a significant way. If a child feels a task is meaningful, the activity will lead to greater learning opportunities (Patzner & Pettegrew, 1996).

One activity that has become popular for use in language arts programs is journal writing. Journal writing can be an outlet for expression and dealing with powerful emotions for many students (p. 23). Journal writing is one way to incorporate writing into the daily classroom activities. It is a natural vehicle into providing students opportunities to find writing as a personal mode of expression. In addition to personal uses, journal writing can also be used as a personal response outlet to literature. Reading Response Notebooks is one form of a journal in which students respond to books and stories. Responding to literature allows for connections with literature through writing (p. 23).

Pen Pal letters have also been found to be an activity that helps students make connections of the writing and reading relationship. Pen Palling is a very personal activity, in which the value of written communication is concretely felt. One research study was done with sixth grade and college students to find out if writing affected reading comprehension. In this study, the two classes participated in a pen pal activity. The results of the study were mixed. The reading comprehension scores showed gains and writing error decreased for the sixth grade participants, whereas the college students showed no significant improvements (Dana, Scheffler, Richmond, and Smith, 1991). Through this study, the researchers concluded that writing for certain groups under certain conditions is a vehicle for reading improvement.

Another form of writing that can be integrated into the classroom is formulaic writing. Formulaic writing has become a popular writing intensive program to teach children how to

organize their writing. One widely used program of formulaic writing is The Writer Within Me, that teaches a step by step modelling process on guiding young children to write well-developed sentences and paragraphs. This program, commonly known as Power Writing, teaches mechanics of language and writing organization. It also emphasizes the importance of focus, support, and elaboration in paragraphs. Through this program, transitional words are taught to help a child become a more fluent writer. The program begins with simple sentences focused around a topic, then moves on to paragraphs, and finally multi-paragraph essays (Hamilton, 1994). Hamilton, in the introduction to her book on Power Writing, stated that this instructional method helped her students, coming from the third lowest poverty level in the state, to score at state level and above in writing.

Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of the implementation of a variety of teaching strategies during the period of October 1998 to February 1999, the students in the targeted classes will show improvement in the areas of reading and writing, as measured by the student writing samples, writing rubrics, standardized reading achievement testing, a language arts survey, and reading and writing inventories.

In order to accomplish the project objective, the following processes will be implemented:

1. Daily writing instruction, in which Power Writing, journal writing, and reflective journaling will be utilized.
2. Time for self-selected reading will be provided on an ongoing basis.
3. Multiple Intelligences practices to reach students of different learning styles in the areas of reading and writing will be incorporated into the curriculum.

Project Action Plan

Week One

1. Parent Surveys sent home to assess student use of reading and writing in the home.
2. Teacher Surveys given to teachers in targeted schools to assess attitudes about writing and reading instruction and the types of reading and writing activities that are commonly used in the targeted schools.
3. Student Language Arts Surveys given to students of targeted classrooms to assess students' attitudes toward language arts.
4. Introduction of Journal Writing. Journal Writing will consist of students being given journals with suggested topics for writing. These journals will be read by the teacher, but not graded in the traditional format. This writing will encourage writing for enjoyment and self-reflection. This activity will continue throughout the intervention period.
5. Introduction of self-selected reading. Self-selected reading will be offered to students at least twice per week. Students will be asked to bring in reading materials from home or the library. This activity will continue throughout the intervention period.
6. Introduction of Multiple Intelligences practices into the curriculum. Multiple Intelligences will be incorporated into the general language arts curriculum in order to better meet students' needs and students with different learning styles. This activity will continue throughout the intervention period.

Week Two

1. The Reader Self-Perception Scale will be given to students of the targeted classes.

This scale measures how students perceive themselves as readers. This scale will also be given at the end of the intervention period to compare and contrast results and see if students' attitudes about themselves as readers have changed.

2. The Gates-MacGinitie reading test will be given to the students at the targeted Sites A and B to assess baseline achievement data. The Nelson reading test will be given to students at the targeted Site C to assess baseline achievement data.

Week Three

1. The Writer Self-Perception Scale will be given to the students of the targeted classes. This scale measures how students perceive themselves as writers. This scale will also be given at the end of the intervention period to compare and contrast results and see if students' attitudes about themselves as writers have changed.

2. Introduction of Reflective Journaling. Reflective Journaling will entail self-reflection after completing various activities. This activity will continue throughout the intervention period.

Weeks Four and Five

Introduction of Power Writing. Power Writing will consist of writing instruction using a formula to construct clear, concise, and well-organized paragraphs. The program begins with very simple sentences, leading to more complex paragraphs. One power writing sample will be collected per week for each student. These samples will be graded according to the writing rubric. Power writing samples will be collected and compared to check for growth and improvement in writing. This activity will continue throughout the intervention period.

Weeks Six to Fourteen

Continuation of Power Writing, self-selected reading and journaling.

Weeks Fifteen and Sixteen

1. Follow-up Reader Self-Perception Scale to compare with baseline data.
2. Follow-up Writer Self-Perception Scale to compare with baseline data.
3. Follow-up Language Arts Student Survey to compare with baseline data.
4. Follow-up standardized reading testing to look for improvement in achievement levels.
5. Sampling of student writing from weeks 4, 8, 12, and 16 to use for comparison purposes.

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of the intervention, self-perception surveys, standardized reading achievement testing, and the language arts student survey will be utilized. In addition, student writing samples will be chosen from the aforementioned weeks to be used in conjunction with the writing rubric. Each student may also keep a journal/portfolio of reflective writing and reading activities implemented throughout the intervention period.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to help improve students' writing skills and reading achievement levels through daily writing activities. Prior to implementation, a variety of surveys and testing was used to determine baseline data. The teacher researchers requested parents to complete a survey regarding the reading and writing habits their children exhibit at home (see Appendix A). A Language Arts Student Survey was administered by the teacher researchers at each site to gain insight as to the students' attitudes toward language arts (see Appendices B and C). Next, the Reader Self-Perception Scale and the Writer Self-Perception Scale were given to the students at each site for the purpose of understanding how the students felt about themselves as readers and writers (see Appendices D and E). Finally, the students at each site were tested in the area of reading achievement using a standardized reading test.

A teacher survey was also created; however, the teacher researchers decided not to distribute the surveys because of differences at the individual sites. At Site A, the curriculum already included activities for reading and writing. In addition, a lack of scheduling time made it difficult to communicate with other faculty members. The teacher researcher at Site B decided not to give the survey because the use of writing integrated within the reading series was

evident through curriculum outlines. A writing curriculum was also in place at this site. At Site C, the teacher survey was not given due to the fact that writing is included in all areas of the curriculum to some degree.

Journal writing, self-selected reading, reflective journaling, and Power Writing were chosen to meet the desired objective of this research project. These strategies were introduced week by week and continued throughout the intervention period. A detailed description of the implementation of these strategies at each site follows.

Journal writing was used to encourage the students to write about various topics. This process was planned to be introduced at the beginning of the intervention period and to continue throughout. The teacher researchers used the journal writing as suitable to their classrooms' needs. Sample journal prompts can be found in Appendix F. At Site A, the students were actually introduced to morning journal writing during the first week of school. Establishing a daily classroom routine was very important for the children, especially since the class was a split third and fourth grade. Morning journal writing was done two to three times per week and continued throughout the intervention period. Topics for this activity were varied. Introduction to journal writing was modeled by the teacher researcher. Examples included activities from daily journal writing calendar book selections as well as events that occurred in the news. There were also occasions when a child was chosen to select the topic for the day.

The students at Site A were put into cooperative groups to offer peer assistance with spelling and grammar as needed. These activities were read by the teacher researcher, but not graded. This was to encourage writing for enjoyment. Throughout the intervention period, the students appeared to enjoy journal writing. At first, several students had negative feelings toward

writing; however, as activities continued, improvement could be seen, especially in the areas of sentence structure and length of written material. The children were able to read each other's papers and give suggested corrections to their peers, which was very difficult at the beginning of the intervention period.

The students at Site B were introduced to journal writing during the first week of school. This activity is required through the integrated reading and language program at this site. Journal writing was done two to three times per week. The students were given a suggested topic for writing by the teacher researcher; however, the students were encouraged to use this time to write about whatever topic they wanted. Many students chose to use this time to write stories and personal reflections of their lives. Throughout the intervention, some students at Site B were experiencing difficulties writing for the allotted amount of time of 10-15 minutes per journal session. The teacher researcher then required the students to write at least half a page in their journals, and then the students were allowed to draw pictures to accompany the journal entry for that day. Journal entries were not graded in the traditional format, as they were used to promote writing for enjoyment and reflection. Each day that journal writing was used, three students shared a journal entry that they were proud of.

At Site C, journal writing was also established at the beginning of the school year, several weeks before the research project actually began, and continued throughout the intervention period. The purpose for this was to establish the habit of journal writing as a regular segment of the class and to gain some insight as to the students' interests, their writing abilities, and their actual desire to write.

At Site C, the students' journals were written in spiral notebooks that remained in the classroom to avoid loss. The journals were written on an average of twice a week and covered a variety of topics. Some of the topics were used to encourage the students to incorporate higher level thinking skills in their writing. These journals were read by the teacher researcher, but they were not formally graded. Constructive feedback was given in a format similar to writing notes to encourage further thought and elaboration. The students were also encouraged to write back to the teacher researcher with their comments and ideas.

Self-selected reading was introduced to encourage the students to read a variety of written materials. This activity was planned to be introduced during the second week of the intervention period and continue throughout. However, each teacher researcher introduced this activity at a time most conducive to their classroom structure.

Self-selected reading was introduced at Site A in mid-September before the intervention period actually began. Reading selections were from the classroom Hug-A-Book table, the teacher researcher's personal books, books on tape, and computer reading selections. Students were encouraged to use the library for additional reading materials. During the school year, the students at Site A also participated in the Links to Literacy, a reading incentive program in place at the school. During the intervention period, the students had read over 550 self-selected materials. Self-selected reading gave the children opportunities to present oral as well as written reports.

At Site B, self-selected reading is a required aspect of the integrated reading and writing curriculum. This activity was introduced at the beginning of the school year. Time for sustained silent reading was given at the beginning of each day for approximately ten to fifteen minutes.

The students were encouraged to bring their own reading materials, but additional high-interest reading materials were also provided for the students by the teacher researcher. Self-selected reading was also encouraged by the administration at Site B. Once a month, the students participated in a school-wide Drop Everything And Read (DEAR) time for fifteen minutes.

The implementation of self-selected reading at Site C began during the last week of September. This activity involved reading outside of the class due to time constraints caused by the fifty-five minute class period. Also, this was to encourage independent reading outside the school setting.

At Site C, each student was required to complete a short form entailing their daily reading endeavors (see Appendix G). Many options were given to the students for this reading, such as Internet articles, newspapers, short stories, magazines, comic books, and required textbook readings. At the onset of this activity, the students were required to read for five minutes daily. The time requirement was increased by five minute increments approximately every third week to a maximum of twenty minutes per day. In many cases, the students exceeded the time limit.

At all three sites, the use of the Multiple Intelligences Theory was incorporated into the curriculum when the teacher researchers felt it was appropriate to encourage the many different learning styles and cultural backgrounds at the various sites. Students composed songs and raps and wrote stories and poetry to music. Drawing and illustrating were extremely popular at all sites, especially for the bilingual students at Site A.

During the third week, reflective journaling was introduced at each site. Reflective journaling was approached in a variety of ways. Some examples included responding to literature, reflecting upon the day's activities, or expressing personal feelings. Reflective journaling was used throughout the intervention period to enhance the language arts curriculum at each site.

At Site A, reflective journaling was recorded in the form of a diary in which the children wrote their personal reflections after completing various activities. This was also used as a way for the children to write about their emotions. Since this journal was in a diary format, the teacher researcher asked permission to peruse the students' booklets. The personal touch of this booklet was well received by all students. Some children wrote frequently, while others wrote a few words or drew pictures. There were no complaints about this writing, and it also seemed to improve social skills.

The teacher researcher at Site B felt that reflective journaling was a way for students to personally respond to the literature presented in class. Reflective journaling is a component of the integrated reading and language series at this site. An example of the way reflective journaling was used at Site B was for students to place themselves in the role of a chosen character in the story and write about how they would respond to a situation that may have been presented in the story. At least one reflective journaling piece was done for each story the children read. At times, these journaling assignments were done in the students' writing journals.

At Site C, the teacher researcher chose to use reflective journaling in several ways. One method was to relate to characters in literature. Another method was to encourage the students

to predict what would take place next in a story they were reading. Finally, reflective journaling was also used as a method of assessment. It was used for the students to assess their performance as well as the activity itself. This also provided the teacher researcher with important feedback for future planning.

Power Writing was introduced during week five of the intervention period. The Power Writing program encouraged the students to organize their thoughts using an outline format leading to the construction of clear, concise, and well-organized paragraphs. The program began with very simple sentences while introducing basic transition terms to foster cohesive paragraphs. Refer to Appendices H through K for examples of Power Writing prompts. The writing rubric that was developed by the teacher researchers for use with Power Writing activities can be seen in Appendix L.

The students at Site A had a very difficult time during the first few weeks of this activity. The majority of Power Writing was practiced in small groups, using cooperative learning and peer tutoring. The bilingual children and the children with special needs constantly struggled, even with help. As the Power Writing activities continued, most of the students understood the formula and were able to construct short meaningful paragraphs.

At Site A, this strategy was eventually used across the curriculum with other daily writing and oral language activities. At times, the children made this into a game. The students began to incorporate Power Writing in their morning journals, were able to organize their ideas, and write for longer periods of time. Again, each child was able to practice reading another child's written material, which had a positive effect for both the writer and the reader. A journal notebook was also made to accompany a paperback book the children were reading. As the

chapters were read, the students wrote and drew their own versions of the story. There were several times when the children wrote about themselves as the main character/s, while other students changed endings as the story continued. Science Fair and History Fair projects were well written with the help of the Power Writing outline format.

In preparation for the Illinois Standards Assessment Testing (ISAT) at Site A, Power Writing and outlining were used. They became effective tools and helped the students organize their thoughts prior to writing their assignments. Power Writing was also used for math problem solving activities. After story problems were completed, the students wrote their strategies for solving the problems. This was also a good way for the students to check their answers. They also discovered that there was more than one way to write an answer.

At Site B, after Power Writing was introduced, it was scheduled for two to three times per week for the remainder of the intervention. Power Writing and journal writing time were scheduled every other day of the school week. The students at Site B began at the very basic level of Power Writing. During the intervention, they progressed through one-step elaboration of details. Toward the end of the intervention period, Power Writing was used to help the students prepare for ISAT testing. The manual was no longer used, but Power Writing structure was encouraged when the students practiced ISAT writing prompts. During this time, the teacher researcher at this site also experimented with different graphic organizers to improve student writing.

The Power Writing program was employed at Site C earlier than at the other two sites. The program fit into the curriculum that was being used at the time. After the outline structure was introduced, the students were encouraged to infuse this prewriting strategy into their journal

writing. At several points during the intervention period, the Power Writing manual was abandoned; however, the structure of the program was used in conjunction with other areas of the curriculum that benefitted from the same structure. Letters, speeches, and other written projects were examples of activities where Power Writing was incorporated.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to assess the effects of integrating writing into the reading curriculum, the reading and writing self-perception surveys, standardized achievement testing, and the language arts student survey were given during the final weeks of the intervention period. The same students were surveyed and tested; however, one student transferred from Site A and Site C. At Site B, the discrepancies in numbers were due to absences during the post-data collection period. Data for the reader self-perception surveys are presented in Figures 11 through 14 and in Appendix M.

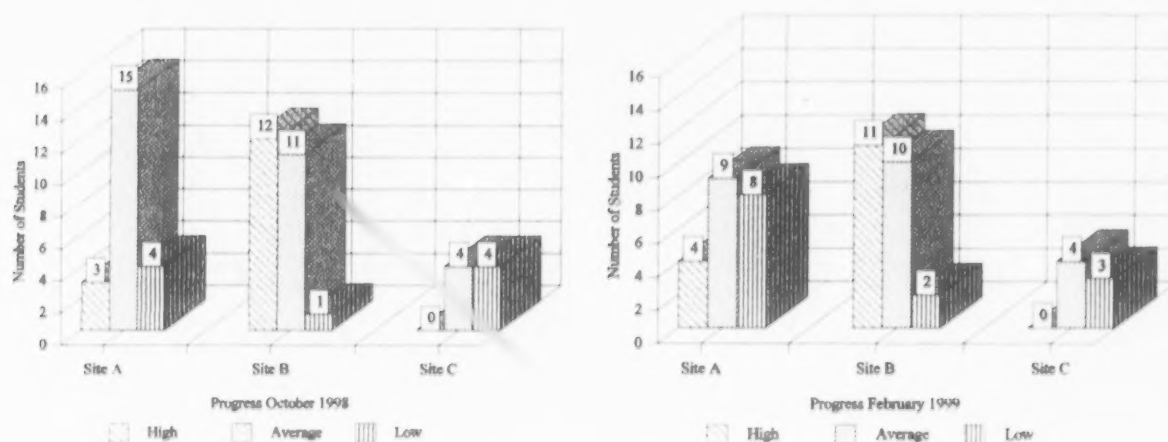


Figure 11. Reader self-perception interpretation of Progress pre- and post-intervention.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

At Site A, the number of students who scored in the low range in the area of Progress doubled. These students may be realizing they are not progressing as rapidly in reading as they would have wished.

There were no significant changes that occurred at Sites B and C in the area of Progress.

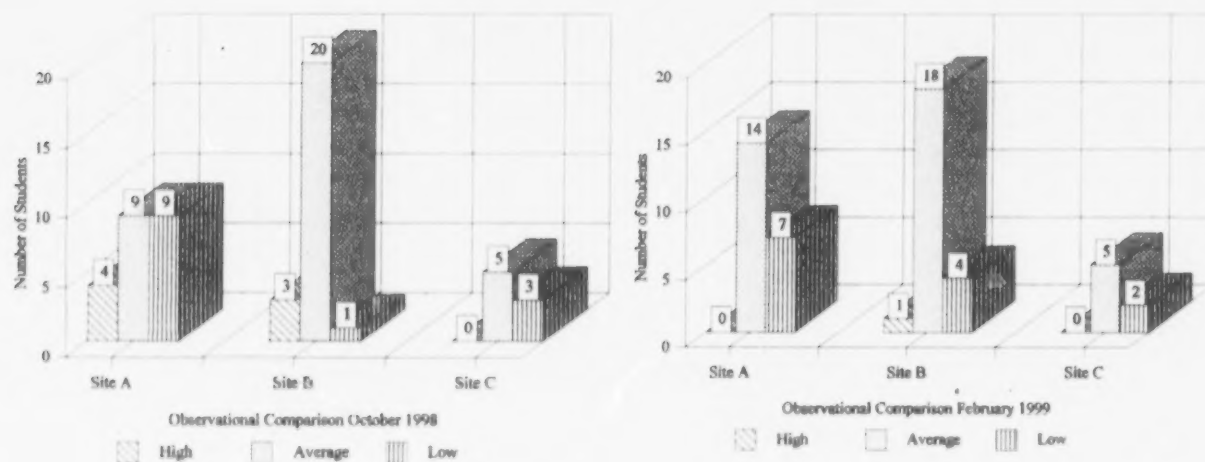


Figure 12. Reader self-perception interpretation of Observational Comparison pre- and post-intervention.

Four students at Site A who had previously scored in the high range of the pretest did not do so in the area of Observational Comparison on the posttest. This may be due to the fact that the students realized they were not better than their peers and they actually did compare with others within their own class.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

At Site B, there was a slight shift in the ranking where three students who were in the high and average categories now fell into the low range when comparing themselves with others in their room.

At Site C, there was no significant change.

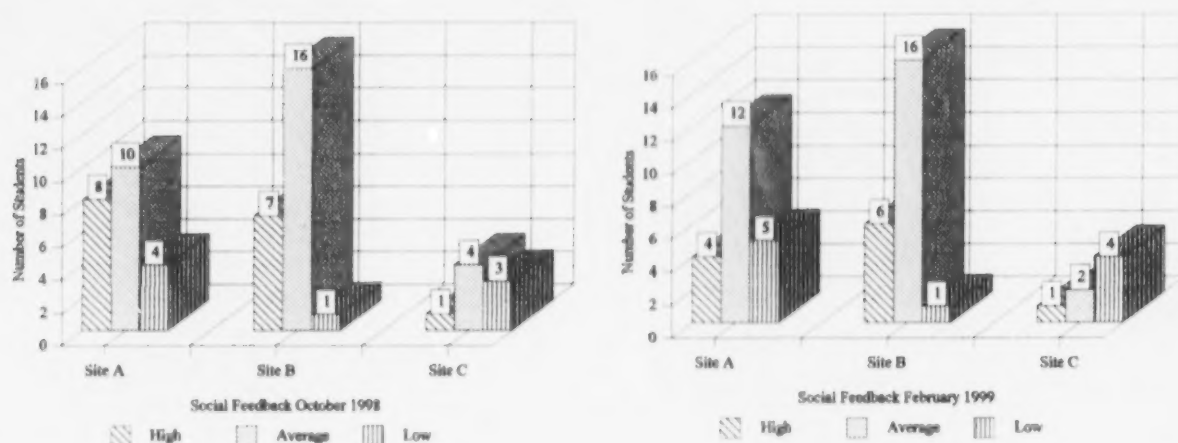


Figure 13. Reader self-perception interpretation of Social Feedback pre- and post-intervention.

Site A had a noticeable drop in the high range of Social Feedback. Although the students were given praise and recognition for their efforts by the teacher researcher, perhaps they felt they were not receiving the same feedback from their peers or significant adults outside of the school setting. These students may be starting to feel somewhat inadequate with their reading skills. This may be due to the increasing independence in classroom work at the third grade level.

There was no significant change at Site B.

The majority of students at Site C now fall into the low range of Social Feedback. In actuality, only one student changed from average to low. Also, one student had transferred. Both students, however, affected the posttest score results.

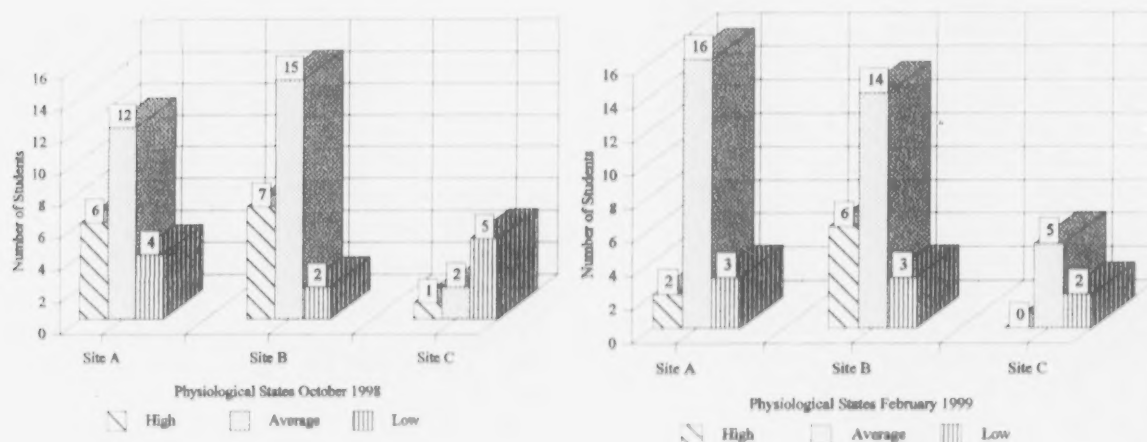


Figure 14. Reader self-perception interpretation of Physiological States pre- and post-intervention.

Again at Site A, there were four students who went from high to average. Reading has become more cumbersome for a few students and the amount of pictures within reading selections has decreased. Also, the bilingual population has had a difficult time and has struggled with the increased amount of printed material which may be overwhelming at times.

There was no significant change at Site B.

At Site C, the majority of students are now in the average range. This could possibly be due to the teacher researcher's attempts to make reading more enjoyable for the class.

Data for the writer self-perception surveys are presented in Figures 15 through 19 and Appendix N.

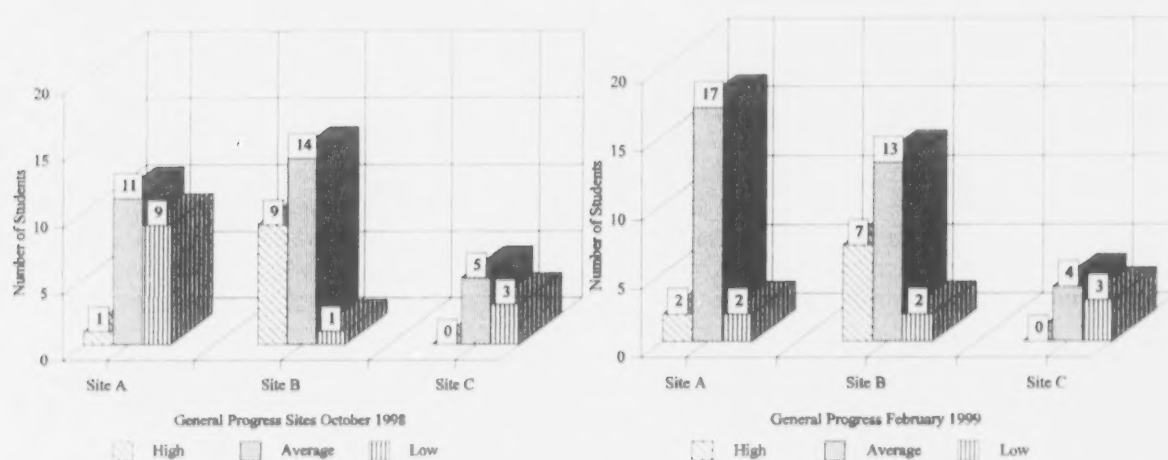


Figure 15. Writer self-perception interpretation of General Progress pre- and post-intervention.

At Site A, many more students felt they were progressing quite well in the area of writing skills.

At Site B, two students were not present for the posttesting. There was a slight increase in the low area. Otherwise, there was no significant change.

At Site C, there was no significant change. The decrease was due to the transfer of one student.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

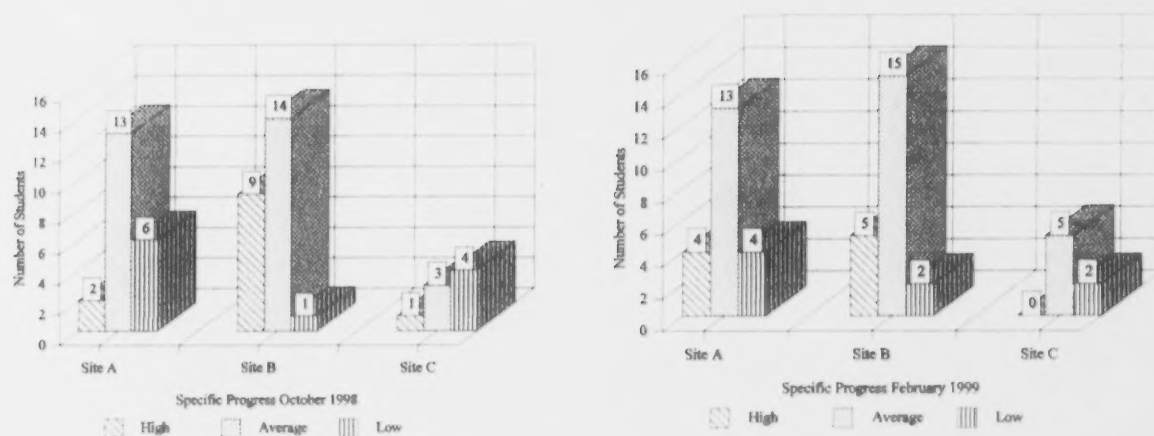


Figure 16. Writer self-perception interpretation of Specific Progress pre- and post-intervention.

At Site B, at least three students moved from the high to average range. Upon examining the individual results, it may be noted that some of these students may have felt they maintained instead of gained skills in this area. The other students noted may have felt their progress was inconsistent in the area of writing.

At Sites A and C, an apparent improvement was noticeable. The results were possibly affected by the Power Writing interventions used at each site which stressed organizational skills in writing.

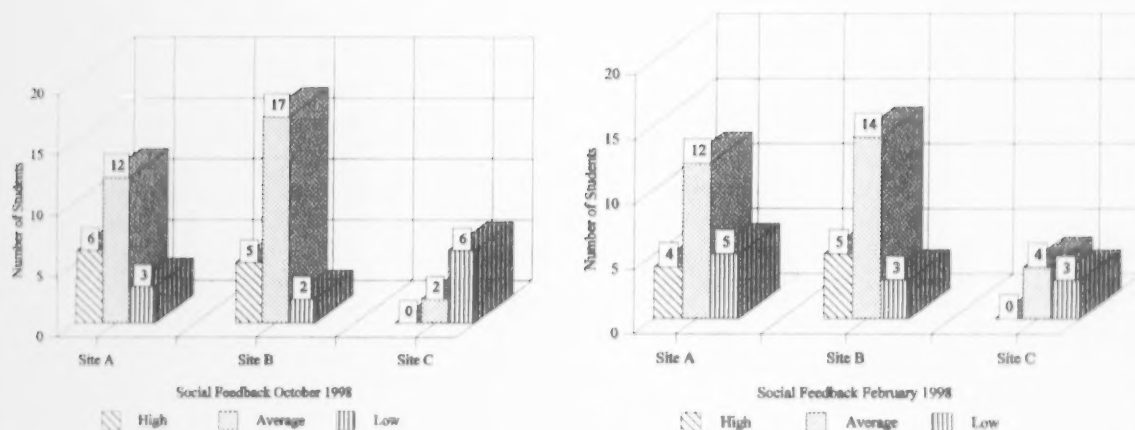


Figure 17. Writer self-perception interpretation of Social Feedback pre- and post-intervention.

Site A again had noticeable changes in the high and low areas of Social Feedback.

Although the students were given praise and recognition for their writing efforts by the teacher researcher, perhaps they felt they were not receiving the same feedback from their peers or significant adults outside of the school setting.

The changes for Site B displayed in Figure 17 most likely were due to the absences of students during the postdata collection.

Site C reflected positive changes in the area of Social Feedback. The majority of the students' perception scores fell into the average range, which was a 100% increase from the pretest. There was a 50% decrease that was also noticeable in the low range. The students may have felt more comfortable and trusting in the positive feedback from their peers and significant adults.

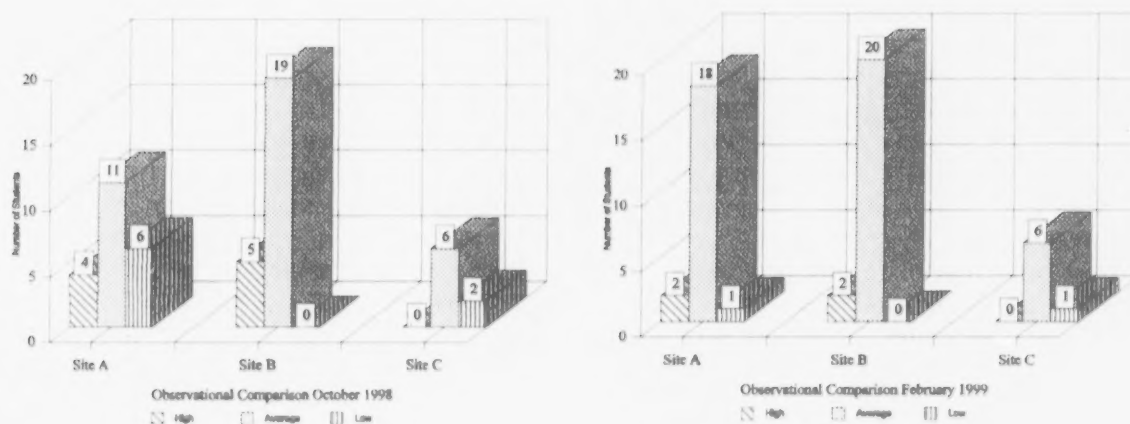


Figure 18. Writer self-perception interpretation of Observational Comparison pre- and post-intervention.

At Sites A and B, more students now scored within the average area of Observational Comparison. At Site A, 83% of the students who were low during the pretest data collection now moved into the average range following the postdata collection. Also at Sites A and B, most students felt they were comparable to others in their class.

There was no significant change at Site C. However, one student did move from low to average.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

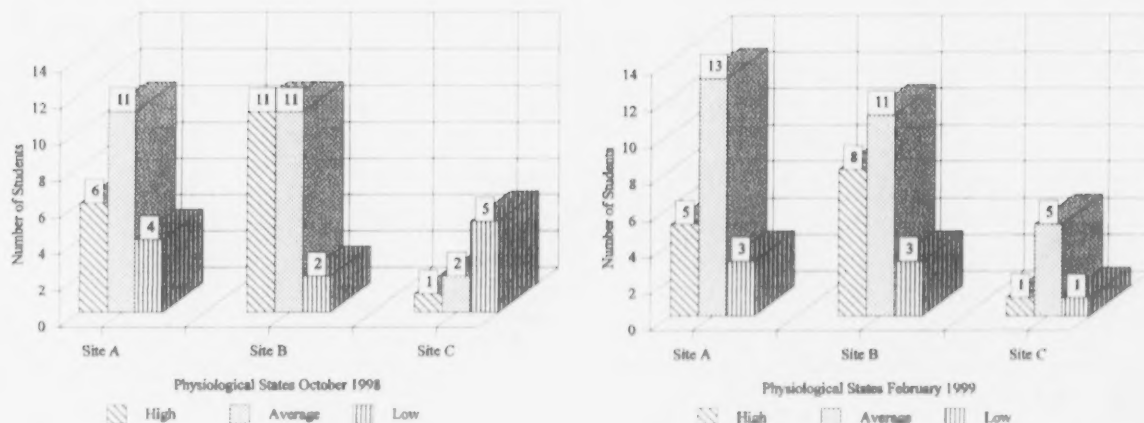


Figure 19. Writer self-perception interpretation of Physiological States pre- and post-intervention.

At Sites A and B, there were no significant changes. However at Site A, there was movement from high to average and from low to average which may indicate feelings of comfort when writing.

Again at Site B, the discrepancies may be due to the absences as indicated earlier.

The change in the comfort level when writing at Site C was evident through the postdata collection. A significant change in this area was evident by the movement of four students from the low to average range. Perhaps this may be due to the fact that the Power Writing system provided the students with a workable structure for writing cohesive paragraphs, thus improving their enjoyment of writing.

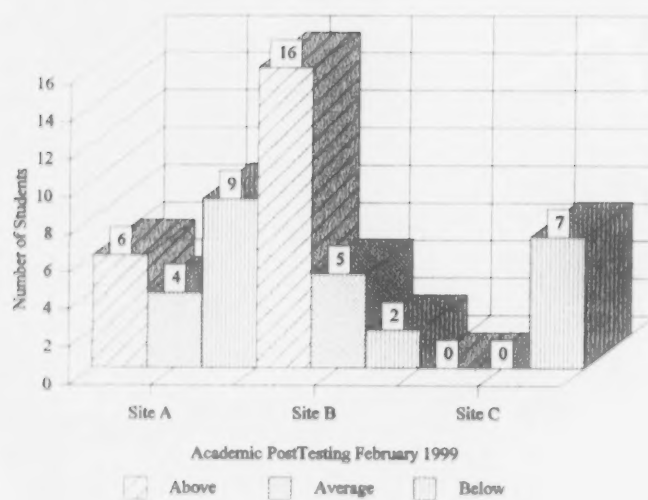
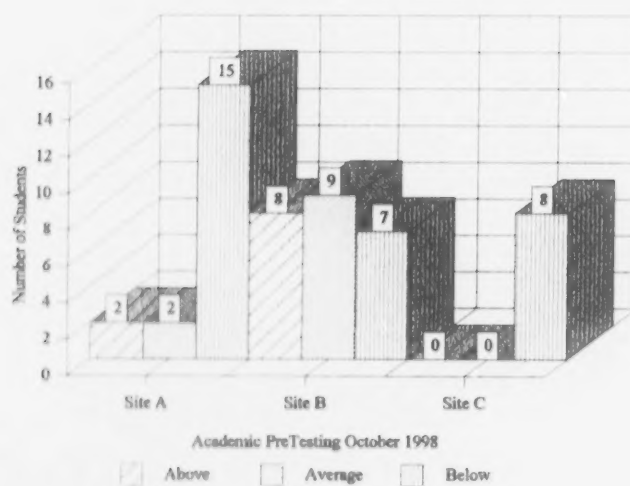


Figure 20. Academic pre- and post-standardized reading achievement testing.

Data for the standardized reading achievement testing is presented in Figure 20, which displays the comparisons of above grade level, grade level, and below grade level reading achievement at Sites A, B, and C.

The standards set by the teacher researchers at the onset of the predata collection in the area of standardized reading achievement testing for grade three at Sites A and B were as follows: Below - those students who scored 2.5 and below; average - those students who scored between 2.6 and 3.5; high - those students who scored 3.6 and above. The standards for grade four at Site A were as follows: Below - those students who scored 3.5 and below; average - those students who scored between 3.6 and 4.5; high - those students who scored 4.6 and above. The same grade level standards at Sites A and B were used for both the pre- and posttest data collection. In addition, the teacher researchers used the same test form as well as the same conversion table.

The high school students at Site C participate in the Special Education program. These students were reading anywhere from four to seven years below grade level prior to the intervention. Therefore, the teacher researcher at Site C felt that setting grade level standards would be inappropriate since expectations of improvement to grade level would be unrealistic in the given timeframe for this project.

As represented in Figure 20, it was noted at Site A that only 21% of the students were reading at or above grade level based on the results of the pretest. After administering the posttest, a positive change occurred as 53% of the students were found to be reading at or above grade level. At Site B, 71% of the students were reading at or above grade level based on the

results of the pretest. After administering the posttest, 91% of the students were reading at or above grade level. It should also be noted that there was a 100% increase in the number of students reading above grade level at this site. At Site C, there were no significant changes. All students were still reading well below grade level.

Before the intervention period began, the goal of the teacher researchers was to have the students progress at least three months in the area of reading achievement. Tables 2, 3, and 4 present raw data and indicate the amount of gain or loss shown by each student in reading achievement at each site.

The raw results for Site A can be found in Table 2. At Site A, 78% of the students indicated a growth of three months or more. At Site A, 14 out of 18 met the goal. This accounted for 78% of the class. The remaining four students, or 22% of the class, did not meet this goal. However, three of these four students showed relatively little or no change.

The raw results for Site B can be found in Table 3. At Site B, 87% of the students showed a gain of at least three months or more. At Site B, 20 out of 23, or 87% of the students, met the goal by gaining at least three months in the area of reading achievement. The three students at Site B, or 13%, who did not meet this goal, showed relatively little or no significant change.

The raw results for Site C can be found in Table 4. At Site C, 29% exhibited growth. Of the seven students at Site C who participated in this project, only two, or 29% gained a minimum of three months in the area of reading achievement. Of the remaining five students, two, or 29%, had little or no significant change. The other three students, or 42%, were found to have a significant loss. This may be due to emotional factors during testing.

Table 2

Standardized Reading Achievement Pre- and Posttesting 89 Composite Questions Site A

Student	October '98 Grade Equivalent	February '99 Grade Equivalent	Gain or Loss
3-1	28 ----- 2.1	51-----3.0	+0.9
3-2	39-----2.4	61-----3.7	+1.3
3-3	77-----5.4	66-----4.0	-1.4
3-4	20-----1.6	31-----2.2	+0.6
3-5	12-----too low	39-----2.4	+2.4
3-6	72-----4.6	74-----4.9	+0.3
3-7	22-----1.7	32-----2.2	+0.5
3-8	39-----2.4	49-----2.8	+0.4
3-9	41-----2.5	54-----3.3	+0.8
4-10	64-----3.8	67-----4.1	+0.3
4-11	42-----2.6	40-----2.5	-0.1
4-12	36-----2.4	53-----3.2	+0.8
4-13	44-----2.6	53-----3.2	+0.6
4-14	56-----3.4	73-----4.7	+1.3
4-15	38-----2.4	38-----2.4	-----
4-16	6-----too low	29-----2.1	+2.1
4-17	70-----4.4	77-----5.4	+1.0
4-18	36-----2.4	35-----2.3	-0.1
4-19	22-----1.7	transferred	-----

Table 3

Standardized Reading Achievement Pre- and Posttesting 89 Composite Questions Site B

Student	October '98 Grade Equivalent	February '99 Grade Equivalent	Gain or Loss
1	47-----2.7	63-----3.8	+1.1
2	77-----5.4	85-----7.6	+2.2
3	23-----1.7	47-----2.7	+1.0
4	39-----2.4	32-----2.2	-0.2
5	68-----4.2	74-----4.9	+0.7
6	48-----2.8	48-----2.8	-----
7	58-----3.5	71-----4.5	+1.0
8	71-----4.5	80-----6.0	+1.5
9	61-----3.7	69-----4.3	+0.6
10	76-----5.2	84-----7.2	+2.0
11	37-----2.4	60-----3.6	+1.2
12	55-----3.3	69-----4.3	+1.0
13	59-----3.5	67-----4.1	+0.6
14	36-----2.4	52-----3.1	+0.7
15	37-----2.4	45-----2.6	+0.2
16	60-----3.6	67-----4.1	+0.5
17	76-----5.2	82-----6.5	+1.3
18	40-----2.5	absent	-----
19	45-----2.6	57-----3.4	+0.8
20	49-----2.8	64-----3.8	+1.0
21	69-----4.3	79-----5.8	+1.5
22	59-----3.5	76-----5.2	+1.7
23	71-----4.5	77-----5.4	+0.9
24	58-----3.5	69-----4.3	+0.8

Table 4**Standardized Reading Achievement Pre- and Posttesting 89 Composite Questions Site C**

Student	October '98 Grade Equivalent	February '99 Grade Equivalent	Gain or Loss
91	3.7	3.6	-0.1
92	2.9	transferred	-----
93	4.0	4.6	+0.6
94	5.4	5.3	-0.1
101	3.9	3.2	-0.7
102	3.1	1.0	-2.1
103	5.7	4.0	-1.7
104	5.0	5.3	+0.3

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data on developing language arts skills through the reading and writing connection, the students displayed a marked improvement in the areas of reading and writing. Power Writing was the core of the action plan. The skills learned through the Power Writing program transferred to other areas of the curriculum. The instruction in Power Writing was very useful to teach organization, transitions, and support and elaboration in writing.

The implementation of journal writing, self-selected reading, and reflective journaling were also seen as essential components of the intervention. Changes were noted in the students' writing abilities over the course of the intervention period. One reason that journal writing and reflective

journaling were viewed as important factors in this project was to introduce writing as a leisure activity versus an instructional necessity. The students at all sites enjoyed the time given for journaling. The teacher researchers also used this as a means to measure growth outside of the traditional instructional setting.

The time for self-selected reading was also viewed as an important aspect of the intervention. The teacher researchers encouraged the students to read independently for enjoyment as well as knowledge. Self-selected reading was started during school hours. The students were gradually able to make the transition from reading at school to reading for personal needs and enjoyment.

Although most students who participated in the project showed growth, some did not. A portion of the students may have shown growth no matter what programs were available. On the other hand, there may always be students in class whose growth will be delayed due to various reasons.

At Site A, the language barrier was hard to overcome. However, peer involvement and translations were very effective. A split third and fourth grade class as well as frequent transfers in and out of the program also presented challenges. The use of one-to-one guidance with peer assistance was helpful in attempting to maintain a smooth transition for all students. In addition to improved achievement scores, there was a positive change in the students' attitudes toward reading and writing. Parents were pleased as they were able to read their children's written assignments and became more involved in creative writing projects. The children became more responsible and were proud to take ownership of their work. There was a positive atmosphere and climate for learning.

At Site B, the components of the action plan were easily implemented into the current integrated reading and writing curriculum. Most students at Site B were already writing proficient paragraphs, but did appear to benefit greatly from the structure of the Power Writing program. The students picked up on the patterning and structure of the Power Writing very quickly. The students' use of support and elaboration showed the most growth in the area of writing. The students were excited about writing. One of the greatest accomplishments seen by the teacher researcher at this site was the students' marked improvement on written assignments and on their integrated reading and writing theme tests throughout the course of the intervention period.

At Site C, true implementation of the action plan was somewhat limited and hindered due to a variety of reasons. First, the time factor of a 55 minute class period meeting during the first hour of the day created problems with tardy interruptions and/or interview slips from the deans' and guidance offices at least twice a week. The time constraint also led to some lessons being completed across two or more days. This seemed to have somewhat of an adverse affect and created problems for those students with attention deficits who prefer to complete tasks within a more stringent time frame.

Also, the students at Site C have been identified with various special education handicapping conditions that affect their learning. The use of adaptations in order to meet the various learning styles and needs is a vital part of this class. Considerations must also be made to address the goals and objectives outlined in each student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), thus taking away some time from the intended intervention plan.

Finally, the students at Site C have reached the high school level chronologically, but are several years behind their peers academically, socially, and emotionally. The added stress of these differences often affect the students' attitudes and production levels during class activities as they often compare the work being done in class to work their peers are doing in other classes. Every attempt is made by this teacher researcher to try to provide parallel activities to allow the students to discuss their work with peers without embarrassment.

Although a multitude of difficulties do exist at Site C, this teacher researcher was pleased with the results of the intervention. The students' feelings toward reading and writing showed a marked improvement over the course of the intervention. This was an important hurdle as the students at this level often avoid activities involving reading and writing skills. The Power Writing program also offered the students another option to employ for writing needs. This, teamed with other graphic organizers, allowed the students to improve their organizational skills in writing for English class as well as other areas of the curriculum.

In the future, the teacher researchers would like to see a longer intervention period. It is felt that the demand to cover so many language arts topics in a given amount of time limits depth and breadth in any one particular area. So much time is spent getting ready for school activities and state testing that the fun is taken out of teachers teaching and students learning.

The teacher researchers question whether the same results would have been achieved in reading had another form of the reading achievement test been used at the end of the intervention period. For this study, the same test was used prior to and following the intervention and did not take into account the natural growth expected over time.

The teacher researchers recommend that if Power Writing is used, it may prove more beneficial if the prompts were tied directly to the curriculum. This would encourage even more personal ties with the literature at hand and provide personal connections with the Power Writing. The teacher researchers also recommend that Power Writing start earlier in the school year. Beginning the process earlier may encourage more growth and substance in the area of writing.

In addition to Power Writing, the teacher researcher at Site A used a combination of strategies described in this project to encourage the students to actively participate in reading and writing activities. Modeling, cooperative learning, peer tutoring, and activities using multiple intelligences were some additional strategies used at Site A throughout the intervention period. These have been beneficial to both the teacher researcher and the students and are recommended for use in the future. Modeling by the teacher researcher should be considered during the many phases of the intervention period. A combination of cooperative learning, peer tutoring, and activities using multiple intelligences worked extremely well and is recommended for teachers working with bilingual students as well as students with special needs. These areas provided a variety of strategies used with both reading and writing.

The results of the self-perception surveys given by the teacher researcher at Site A indicated that some students assumed they were doing well and did not realize they were below grade level. Therefore, it would be interesting to focus on students' reflections on how they feel before and after activities in order for them to have a truer assessment of what they can and cannot do. The teacher researcher also recommends that opportunities be provided for students to do self-evaluations of their work on a periodic basis.

The teacher researcher at Site A feels that scheduling of reading and writing activities into the curriculum needs to be planned very carefully. Time will be of extreme importance as teacher researchers adapt to scheduling changes. If possible, it is recommended that planning be done with a cohort.

The teacher researcher at Site A also recommends using computer technology in the classroom. The use of technology became very beneficial in assisting the bilingual students and those students with special needs at this site. Through the use of computers, the students became highly motivated and eager to learn and work independently.

The teacher researcher at Site B recommends that Power Writing should not be used as the sole format of writing instruction. Although the patterning and structure of formulaic writing is a great way to begin paragraph writing, it can be stifling to the creative writer. Also, when the teacher researcher at Site B began teaching narrative writing, it was found that the Power Writing structure may not be adequate in this area of writing. The rigidity of the formula does not allow for the expression needed in narrative writing. Finally, the teacher researcher also recommends that several different types of graphic organizers be used to teach writing. This allows for flexibility of different writing styles and different forms of writing, such as expository, narrative, and persuasive. The outline style of the Power Writing program is very useful for students. However, other graphic organizers may not only be more appealing to the young writer, but also easier to use and replicate when writing on his/her own. By the fifth grade, formulaic writing is discouraged by state standards, so Power Writing may not be a wise option for continuation beyond third grade, although it is a great place to start.

As a result of this intervention, the teacher researcher at Site C found several implications that may be helpful to others in the future. Time, especially in a special education setting, is an important factor to consider. The 55 minute class period seems to be too stringent for the task at hand. Possibly a program that incorporates block scheduling would be more conducive to this type of intervention in order to allow more time for completion and to follow through on activities within one class session.

Another aspect that the teacher researcher at Site C would recommend is that a brief survey be used to identify the students' learning styles prior to the intervention. This intervention relies rather heavily on written instruction and activities to influence and help improve reading achievement. If the students' learning styles are not complimentary to a strategy so focused on writing, this type of intervention may prove to be unproductive and possibly produce unfavorable results.

Finally, students' perceptions of themselves and their actual skill levels are also an important consideration to factor into the process. The use of the Reader and Writer Self-Perception Surveys helped the teacher researcher at Site C gain some interesting insight into the students' feelings about their skills and attitudes toward reading and writing prior to and following the intervention. With appropriate instructional techniques, supervision, and guidance, the students can be assisted in improving their weak areas for success in the future.

The action research process provided opportunities for personal and professional growth for each of the teacher researchers. Many teaching professionals are fearful and leery of change. This process gave the teacher researchers an opportunity to try something different based on current educational research. A review of current research and educational literature was

essential in gaining knowledge in alternative and varied strategies related to the problem area chosen. The teacher researchers identified a specific problem, created an action plan based on current research, and persevered with the project even when times were difficult. The teacher researchers found the project to be valuable for their students. Each plans to use aspects of the project in the future, possibly with modifications and adaptations.

Action research is a reflective process. Throughout the project, the teacher researchers were bound to the original action plan. As the project continued, discoveries were made and it became apparent where changes in the action plan may have produced more effective results. On the other hand, action research is also an evolving and ever-changing process. Reflective evaluation leads to changes and growth in teaching and improves action planning for the future.

The action research project has given the teacher researchers the motivation to pursue further classroom improvements. This project has provided a process to work through problems in an organized fashion. The teacher researchers also hope to be able to infuse the knowledge of the project and the action research process itself into their school communities.

The teacher researchers hope the students at each site will continue using the intervention strategies learned throughout this period and continue having positive outlooks for the remainder of the year. Finally, the teacher researchers hope that what their students have learned will transfer to their daily lives and future needs.

References

- American Academy of Optometry and the American Optometric Association (1995). Vision, learning, and dyslexia. A joint organizational policy statement of the American academy of optometry and the American optometric association. Optometric Extension Program Foundation [On-line]. Available: www.healthy.net/oep/joint.HTM.
- American Printing House for the Blind, Inc. (No date). APH Resource Services Dept. [On-line]. Available: www.aph.org/contact.htm.
- Anderson, R.C., Hiebert, E.H., Scott, J.A., & Wilkinson, I.A.G. (1985). Becoming a nation of readers: The report of the Commission on Reading. Washington, DC: The National Institute of Education.
- Barber, M., & Carbo, M. (1994). Comparative study of the methods used for the teaching of reading. Syosset, NY: National Reading Styles Institute.
- Barnekow, D.J. (1998). Graphic organizers for language arts classes. Portland, ME: J. Weston Walch.
- Beaupre, C. (1997). Lifelong learning in a developed and developing economy. Ministry of Education [On-line]. Available: www.lifelong-learning.org/beaupre.htm.
- Bellanca, J., & Fogarty, R. (1991). Blueprints for thinking in the cooperative classroom. Arlington Heights, IL: IRI/Skylight.
- Bottomley, D.M., Henk, W.A., & Melnick, S.A. (1997-1998). Assessing children's views about themselves as writers using the writer self-perception scale. The Reading Teacher, 51 (4), 286-296.
- Boyle, J.R., & Yeager, N. (1997). Blueprints for learning: Using cognitive frameworks for understanding. Teaching Exceptional Children, 29 (4), 26-31.
- Carbo, M. (1996, February). Reading styles. Educational Leadership, 53 (5), 8-13.
- Carbo, M. (1996, September). Selecting the right reading method. Teaching K-8, 27 (1), 84-87.
- Checkley, K. (1997). The first seven...and the eighth. Educational Leadership [On-line], 55, 1. Available: www.ascd.org/pubs/el/sept97/gardnerc.html.
- Cobine, G.R. (1995). Writing as a response to reading. ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 386 734 95).

Cooney, J., & Ferguson, D. (No date). What problems are schools facing? Ministry of Education [On-line]. Available: www.minedu.govt.nz/Schools/Improving Achievement/1.htm.

Dana, M.E., Scheffler, A.J., Richmond, M.G., & Smith, S. (1991). Writing to read: Pen palling for a purpose. Reading Improvement, 28 (2), 113-118.

Decker, B.C. (1986). Aliteracy: What teachers can do to keep Johnny reading. Journal of Teacher Education, 37 (6), 55-58.

Duffrin, E. (1996). Direct instruction making waves. Catalyst [On-line]. Available: www.catalyst-chicago.org/09-96/106main.htm.

Education Week on the Web (1998). Parental involvement. Education Week on the Web: Issues Page [On-line]. Available: www.edweek.org/context/topics/parent.htm.

Family Learning Association (1998). Reading underachievement - its causes. Kids Can Learn Inc. [On-line]. Available: www.kidscanlearn.com.

Feng, J. (1994). Asian-American children: What teachers should know. ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education. ERIC Digest [On-line]. Available: ericps.ed.uiuc.edu/eece/pubs/digests/1994/feng94.html.

Fogarty, R., & Bellanca, J. (1992). Capture the vision: Future world, future school. In A. Costa, J. Bellanca, & R. Fogarty (Eds.). If minds matter: A forward to the future Vol. 1. (pp. 13-23). Arlington Heights, IL: IRI/Skylight.

Frenier, H.A. (1996). The 1/3 report. Teaching K-8, 27 (1), 82-83.

Fusco, E., & Fountain, G. (1992). Reflective teacher, reflective learner. In A. Costa, J. Bellanca, & R. Fogarty (Eds.). If minds matter: A forward to the future Vol. 1. (pp. 239-255). Arlington Heights, IL: IRI/Skylight.

Gleason, M.M. (1995). Using direct instruction to integrate reading and writing for students with learning disabilities. Reading and Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning Difficulties, 11 (1), 91-108.

Goldenhersh, B. (1994). Story ladders: A reading-writing connection. Ohio Reading Teacher, 29 (2), 11-13.

Growler Tapes (No date). Kids stories, children's tapes, kids audio: Sophisticated storytelling for kids. The Growler Tapes Audio Adventures [On-line]. Available: www.growler.com/.

Hamilton, S.M. (1994). The power writer within me. Chicago: Hamilton Educational Consultants.

Hasselbring, T.S., Goin, L., Taylor, R., Bottge, B., and Daley, P. (1997). The computer doesn't embarrass me. Educational Leadership, 55 (3), 30-33.

Hayes, T.J. (1999). Focus: Traditional education vs. direct instruction. Education Reporter [On-line], (156). Available: www.basenet.net/~eagle/educate/1999/jan99/focus.html.

Henk, W.A., & Melnick, S.A. (1995). The reader self-perception scale (RSPS): A new tool for measuring how children feel about themselves as readers. The Reading Teacher, 48 (6), 470-482.

Howard, K. (1996). When parents serve as writing critics. Teaching K-8, 27 (2), 58-62.

Illinois State Board of Education Services for the Visually Impaired. (Contact to access materials/information: 100 N. First Street, Springfield, IL 62777).

Janiuk, D.M., & Shanahan, T. (1988). Applying adult literacy practices in primary grade instruction. The Reading Teacher, 41 (9), 880-886.

John Hopkins Team Learning Project (No date). Student team learning. John Hopkins University [On-line]. Available: www.csos.jhu.edu/sfa/stl.html.

Joyce, B., & Showers, B. (1995). Student achievement through staff development: Fundamentals of school renewal. White Plains, NY: Longman Publishers.

Kletzien, S.B., & Hushion, B.C. (1992). Reading workshop: Reading, writing, thinking. Journal of Reading, 35 (6), 444-451.

Krashen, S. (1998, July). Bilingual education and the dropout argument. Discover [On-line]. Available: www.ncbe.gwu.edu/ncbepubs/discover4/index.htm.

Labbo, L.D., Murray, B.A., & Phillips, M. (1995/1996). Writing to read: From inheritance to innovation and invitation. The Reading Teacher, 49 (4), 314-321.

Leahy, P. (1991). A multi-year formative evaluation of IBM's Writing to Read program. Reading Improvement, 28 (4), 257-264.

Lipson, M.Y., Valencia, S.W., Wixson, K.K., & Peters, C.W. (1993). Integration and thematic teaching: Integration to improve teaching and learning. Language Arts, 70 (3), 252-263.

MacArthur, C.A. (1996). Using technology to enhance the writing processes of students with learning disabilities. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 29 (4), 344-354.

Manguel, A. (1996). A history of reading. New York: Viking-Penguin.

Manning, M., & Manning, G. (1996). Tried and true practices. Teaching K-8, 26 (8), 106-109.

Manzo, K.K. (1998, May 6). America reads is taking hold at grassroots. Education Week on the Web [Online]. Available:
<http://www.edweek.org/htbin/fastwe...DS%26OR%26%28%reading%26problems%29>

Marshall, H.H., & Weinstein, R.S. (1984). Classroom factors affecting students' self-evaluations: An interactional model. Review of Educational Research, 54 (3), 301-325.

Moore, P. (1998). The bottom line on reading programs: Most work some of the time, with some students. Education News [Online]. Available:
www.ume.maine.edu/~cofed/news/4-15-98.html.

Moore, S.A., & Moore, D.W. (1990). Reading through writing through reading through writing. The Reading Teacher, 44 (2), 158-160.

National Research Council (1998). Preventing reading difficulties in young children. [On-line]. Available: www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/reading/nrc_learner.html.

Pamuk, O. (1990). The White Castle. (V. Holbrook, trans.) Manchester Press.

Patzer, C.E., & Pettegrew, B.S. (1996). Finding a voice. Teaching Exceptional Children, 29 (2), 22-27.

Riley, R.W. (1996). Improving the reading and writing skills of America's students. Learning Disabilities Quarterly 19 (2), 67-69.

Roberts, P.L., & Kellough, R.D. (1996). A guide for developing an interdisciplinary thematic unit. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Shanahan, T. (1997). Reading-writing relationships, thematic units, inquiry learning... in pursuit of effective integrated literacy instruction. The Reading Teacher, 51 (1), 12-19.

Slavin, R.E. (1990). IBM's Writing to Read: Is it right for reading? Phi Delta Kappan, 72 (3), 214-216.

Slavin, R.E. (1996). Neverstreaming: Preventing learning disabilities. Educational Leadership, 53 (5), 4-7.

Smith, C.B., & Sensenbaugh, R. (1992). Helping children overcome reading difficulties. ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 344 190 92). ERIC Digest [On-line]. Available: www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content2/Overcome.Reading.html.

Strickland, D.S. (1997/1998). What's basic in beginning reading? Finding common ground. Educational Leadership [Online], 55(6). Available: www.ascd.org/pubs/el/mar98/extstric.html.

Tapscott, D. (1999). Educating the net generation. Educational Leadership, 56 (5), 6-11.

U.S. Secretary of Education Riley (1996, October 11). National assessments show gains in math, science; reading, writing skills stable. Press release [On-line]. Available: www.ed.gov/PressReleases/10-1996/trend96.html.

Utay, C. & Utay, J. (1997). Peer-assisted learning: The effects of cooperative learning and cross-age peer tutoring with word processing on writing skills of students with learning disabilities. Journal of Computing in Childhood and Education, 8 (2/3), 165-185.

Van Horn, L. (1997). The characters within us: Readers connect with characters to create meaning and understanding. Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 40 (5), 342-347.

Veenema, S., & Gardner, H. (1996). Multimedia and multiple intelligences. The American Prospect [On-line], (29), 69-75. Available: epn.org/prospect/29/29veen.html.

Winograd, P., & Gaskins, R.W. (1992). Metacognition: Matters of the mind, matters of the heart. In A. Costa, J. Bellanca, & R. Fogarty (Eds.). If minds matter: A foreword to the future Vol. 1. (pp. 225-238). Arlington Heights, IL: IRI/Skylight.

Worthy, J., Turner, M., & Moorman, M. (1998). The precarious place of self-selected reading. Language Arts, 75 (4), 296-303.

Appendix A

Parent Survey

1. Does your child read at home?
_____ yes _____ no
2. What types of reading materials does your child use at home?
(check all that apply)
_____ magazines _____ taped stories
_____ newspapers _____ picture books
_____ library books _____ comic books
_____ short stories _____ paperbacks
_____ other
 please describe

3. Does your child need help when reading at home?
_____ yes _____ no
4. Does your child write at home?
_____ yes _____ no
5. What types of writing activities does your child do at home?
(check all that apply)
_____ letters/cards _____ diary/journal
_____ shopping lists _____ e-mail
_____ phone messages _____ stories
_____ other
 please describe

6. Does your child need help when writing at home?
_____ yes _____ no

Appendix B
Language Arts Attitude Survey
(Elementary level)

Name _____

LANGUAGE ARTS ATTITUDE SURVEY

1. How do you feel about reading a book when you're at home and have some free time?



2. How do you feel when you receive a book for a gift?



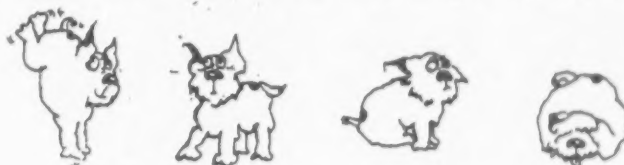
3. How do you feel when your parent reads you a book before going to bed?



4. How do you feel when you have to read in front of your classmates?



5. How do you feel when you read a book to a younger boy or girl?



6. How do you feel about reading the newspaper?



7. How do you feel when you are asked to have a Book Talk with a friend?



8. How do you feel about going to the library?



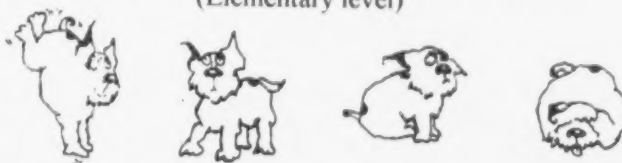
9. How do you feel when your teacher assigns you a book to read?



10. How do you feel when you have to read out loud with a partner?



11. How do you feel when you don't know a new word in a book?
(Elementary level)



12. How do you feel when someone asks you to give an oral book report?



13. How do you feel when your teacher calls on you to answer a question in class?



14. How do you feel when you have to speak in front of your classmates?



15. How do you feel when you have to ask your teacher a question?



Appendix C
Language Arts Attitude Survey
(High school level)

Date: _____

LANGUAGE ARTS ATTITUDE SURVEY

Directions: For each statement below, circle the number that best describes how you feel about the statement. The scale is as follows:

4 = very good

3 = good

2 = bad

1 = very bad

1. How do you feel about reading a book when you're at home and have some free time?

4 3 2 1

2. How do you feel when you receive a book for a gift?

4 3 2 1

3. How do you feel when a parent reads to you from a book at the end of the day?

4 3 2 1

4. How do you feel when you have to read in front of your classmates?

4 3 2 1

5. How do you feel when you read a book to a younger boy or girl?

4 3 2 1

6. How do you feel about reading the newspaper?

4 3 2 1

7. How do you feel when you are asked to have a "Book Talk" with a friend?

4 3 2 1

8. How do you feel about going to the library?

4 3 2 1

9. How do you feel when your teacher assigns you a book to read?

4 3 2 1

10. How do you feel when you have to read out loud with a partner?

4 3 2 1

11. How do you feel when you don't know a new word in a book?

4 3 2 1

12. How do you feel when someone asks you to give an oral book report?

4 3 2 1

13. How do you feel when your teacher calls on you to answer a question in class?

4 3 2 1

14. How do you feel when you have to speak in front of your classmates?

4 3 2 1

15. How do you feel when you have to ask your teacher a question?

4 3 2 1

Appendix D

The Reader Self-Perception Scale

Listed below are statements about reading. Please read each statement carefully. Then circle the number that shows how much you agree or disagree with the statement. Use the following scale:

- 5 = strongly agree
- 4 = agree
- 3 = undecided
- 2 = disagree
- 1 = strongly disagree

Example: I think pizza with pepperoni is the best. 5 4 3 2 1

If you are really positive that pepperoni pizza is best, circle 5 (strongly agree).
 If you think that pepperoni pizza is good but maybe not great, circle 4 (agree).
 If you can't decide whether or not it is best, circle 3 (undecided).
 If you think that pepperoni pizza is not all that good, circle 2 (disagree).
 If you are really positive that pepperoni pizza is not good, circle 1 (strongly disagree).

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| 1. I think that I am a good reader. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 2. I can tell that my teacher likes to listen to me read. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 3. My teacher thinks that my reading is fine. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 4. I read faster than other kids. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 5. I like to read aloud. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 6. When I read, I can figure out words better than other kids. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 7. My classmates like to listen to me read. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 8. I feel good inside when I read. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 9. My classmates think that I read pretty well. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 10. When I read, I don't have to try as hard as I used to. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 11. I seem to know more words than the other kids when I read. | 5 4 3 2 1 |

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 12. People in my family think I am a good reader. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 13. I am getting better at reading. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 14. I understand what I read as well as other kids. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 15. When I read, I need less help than I used to. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 16. Reading makes me feel happy inside. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 17. My teacher thinks I am a good reader. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 18. Reading is easier for me than it used to be. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 19. I read faster than I could before. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 20. I read better than other kids in my class. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 21. I feel calm when I read. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 22. I read more than other kids. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 23. I understand what I read better than I could before. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 24. I can figure out words better than I could before. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 25. I feel comfortable when I read. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 26. I think reading is relaxing. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 27. I read better now than I could before. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 28. When I read, I recognize more words than I used to. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 29. Reading makes me feel good. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 30. Other kids think I'm a good reader. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 31. People in my family think I read pretty well. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 32. I enjoy reading. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 33. People in my family like to listen to me read. | 5 4 3 2 1 |

Appendix E

The Writer Self-Perception Scale

Listed below are statements about writing. Please read each statement carefully. Then circle the number that shows how much you agree or disagree with the statement. Use the following scale:

- 5 = strongly agree
- 4 = agree
- 3 = undecided
- 2 = disagree
- 1 = strongly disagree

Example: I think Batman is the greatest super hero. 5 4 3 2 1

If you are really positive the Batman is the greatest, circle 5 (strongly agree).
 If you think that Batman is good but maybe not great, circle 4 (agree).
 If you can't decide whether or not Batman is the greatest, circle 3 (undecided).
 If you think that Batman is not all that great, circle 2 (disagree).
 If you are really positive that Batman is not the greatest, circle 1 (strongly disagree).

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 1. I write better than other kids in my class. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 2. I like how writing makes me feel inside. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 3. Writing is easier for me than it used to be. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 4. When I write, my organization is better than the other kids in my class. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 5. People in my family think I am a good writer. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 6. I am getting better at writing. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 7. When I write, I feel calm. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 8. My writing is more interesting than my classmates' writing. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 9. My teacher thinks my writing is fine. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 10. Other kids think I am a good writer. | 5 4 3 2 1 |

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 11. My sentences and paragraphs fit together as well as my classmates' sentences and paragraphs. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 12. I need less help to write well than I used to. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 13. People in my family think I write pretty well. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 14. I write better now than I would before. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 15. I think I am a good writer. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 16. I put my sentences in a better order than the other kids. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 17. My writing has improved. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 18. My writing is better than before. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 19. It's easier to write well now than it used to be. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 20. The organization of my writing has really improved. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 21. The sentences I use in my writing stick to the topic more than the ones the other kids use. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 22. The words I use in my writing are better than the ones I used before. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 23. I write more often than other kids. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 24. I am relaxed when I write. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 25. My descriptions are more interesting than before. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 26. The words I use in my writing are better than the ones other kids use. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 27. I feel comfortable when I write. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 28. My teacher thinks I am a good writer. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 29. My sentences stick to the topic better now. | 5 4 3 2 1 |

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 30. My writing seems to be more clear than my classmates' writing. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 31. When I write, the sentences and paragraphs fit together better than they used to. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 32. Writing makes me feel good. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 33. I can tell that my teacher thinks my writing is fine. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 34. The order of my sentences makes better sense now. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 35. I enjoy writing. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 36. My writing is more clear than it used to be. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 37. My classmates would say I write well. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 38. I choose the words I use in my writing more carefully now. | 5 4 3 2 1 |

Appendix F

Sample writing prompts used at Sites A, B, and C

If you were a present under the Christmas tree, what would you be?

Write letters to Mr. Mark McGuire and Mr. Sammy Sosa congratulating them on their many homeruns. Invite them to our school.

Write freely about your worst fear.

Who is your hero? Why?

Invent the best dessert in the world. Be descriptive. Make me hungry.

Due to strange interference in the atmosphere, you will not be able to watch TV for one full week. What will you do instead?

Appendix G
Daily reading at Site C

INDEPENDENT READING

Beginning this weekend, you are going to allow 5 minutes of your time each day to read something that interests you. I would suggest that you do your daily reading activity at home, but you may use your study hall or resource time if you'd like. (*Note: increments of reading time were increased by 5 minutes every other week up to 30 minutes of reading time.)

You may choose anything that you would like to read. It can be a book, short story, magazine, newspaper, comic book, or information from the internet - if you have access to a computer. (I have a variety of short stories and books that you can check out to use!) Your reading should be something other than a homework assignment - something of interest to you that you want to read.

For each daily reading, you are to complete a short reading log. Please fill out your log completely and accurately for each day's reading! These logs will be collected each Friday in class.

MY DAILY READING LOG

(Sample segment - students received packet for 7 days)

Date _____

Started reading: _____

Stopped reading: _____

Name/Title of reading material: _____
(Book, magazine, newspaper, internet article, etc.)

Summary of what I read (2 sentence minimum):

Appendix H

SENTENCE POWER



Power (1) sentence is the Main Idea.

Power (2) sentences give major supporting details about the Power (1) sentence. Transitional words, first and second, are used to introduce the Power (2) sentences.

EXAMPLE: (1) There are two pets that I like.

(2) First, I like cats.

(2) Second, I like rabbits.

Follow the example when doing this activity.

(1) There are two pets that I like.

(2) First, _____

(2) Second, _____

(1) There are two colors that I like.

(2) First, _____

(2) Second, _____

(1) There are two reasons why I like Christmas.

(2) First, _____

(2) Second, _____

(1) There are two fairy tales that I enjoy.

(2) First, _____

(2) Second, _____

Appendix I

SENTENCE POWER



Power (1) sentence is the Main Idea.
 Power (2) sentences give major supporting details
 about the Power (1) sentence. Transitional Words are
 used to introduce the Power (2) sentences.



EXAMPLE: (1) There are two hobbies that I enjoy.

(2) One is collecting stamps.

(2) Another is collecting baseball cards.

To do this activity, you may use other Transition Words such as: The other is, to begin with, also, next, or secondly to introduce the Power (2) sentences.

Follow the example when doing this activity.

(1) There are two hobbies that I enjoy.

(2) First, _____

(2) Second, _____

(1) There are two games I like to play at parties.

(2) One is _____

(2) The other is _____

(1) There are two reasons that I like to go to the circus.

(2) To begin with, _____

(2) Next, _____

Appendix J

WRITING PARAGRAPHS



Power (1) if the Main Idea.

Power (2) gives the major supporting details about Power (1).

Transitional Words - To begin with, and Also

(1) Chicago - City

(2) parks

(2) museums

There are many things that I like about Chicago. To begin with, Chicago has many parks. Also, Chicago has many museums. Chicago is a very interesting city with its parks and museums.

Keep the same pattern as above. You are to use To begin with and Also. Don't

forget to put a comma after To begin with and Also. Don't forget to indent.

Please write about your city or town.

(1) _____

(2) _____

(2) _____

Appendix K

WRITING PARAGRAPHS

Power (1) sentence is the Main Idea.

Power (2) sentence give the major supporting details about Power (1).

Power (3) sentences give elaborating details about Power (2).

Example: (1) Zoo

(2) Elephants

(3) long trunks

(3) large ears

(1) The zoo is one of my favorite places to visit. (2) To begin with, I love to look at the elephants. (3) For instance, I like to watch the elephants carry hay and sticks with their long trunks. (3) Furthermore, I like the way they flap their ears back and forth.

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

(3) _____

WRITING RUBRIC

	1 (Novice)	2 (Apprentice)	3 (Proficient)	4 (Distinguished)
Main Idea	Writer shows limited knowledge of purpose for writing. No main idea is evident.	Writer hints at main idea but does not state.	Writer has established a main idea.	Writer clearly states main idea in topic sentence.
Details	Ideas are limited with unrelated details.	Ideas are not developed. Details are repeated.	Ideas are supported with some details.	Ideas are supported with details and elaborations.
Organization	No organization is evident.	Poorly organized: Power writing paragraph is poor or not used. No outline.	Well organized: Power writing paragraphs have been used. Outline has been attempted.	Well organized: Power writing paragraphs have been used. Outline used effectively.
Sentence Structure	Incorrect sentence structure.	No variety.	Writer uses some variety in sentence structure and length.	Writer uses variety in sentence structure and length.
Convention	Has errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization leading to confusion of the reader. Not in paragraph form.	Has many errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Not in paragraph form.	Has few errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Uses paragraph form.	Uses correct spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Uses paragraph form.

Total ____ X 5 = ____

100 - 81 = Excellent

80 - 51 = Acceptable (may improve and return for more points)

Below 50 = Not acceptable (may improve, correct, and redo)

Appendix M

Raw data - Reader self-perception score interpretation

October 1998 Before Intervention				February 1999 After Intervention			
PROGRESS	High	Average	Low	PROGRESS	High	Average	Low
Site A	3	15	4	Site A	4	9	8
Site B	12	11	1	Site B	11	10	2
Site C	0	4	4	Site C	0	4	3
SOCIAL FEEDBACK	High	Average	Low	SOCIAL FEEDBACK	High	Average	Low
Site A	8	10	4	Site A	4	12	5
Site B	7	16	1	Site B	6	16	1
Site C	1	4	3	Site C	1	2	4
OBSERVATIONAL COMPARISON	High	Average	Low	OBSERVATIONAL COMPARISON	High	Average	Low
Site A	4	9	9	Site A	0	14	7
Site B	3	20	1	Site B	1	18	4
Site C	0	5	3	Site C	0	5	2
PHYSIOLOGICAL STATES	High	Average	Low	PHYSIOLOGICAL STATES	High	Average	Low
Site A	6	12	4	Site A	2	16	3
Site B	7	15	2	Site B	6	14	3
Site C	1	2	5	Site C	0	5	2

Appendix N

Raw data - Writer self-perception score interpretation

October 1998 Before InterventionFebruary 1999 After Intervention

GENERAL PROGRESS	High	Average	Low		GENERAL PROGRESS	High	Average	Low
Site A	1	11	9		Site A	2	17	2
Site B	9	14	1		Site B	7	13	2
Site C	0	5	3		Site C	0	4	3
SPECIFIC PROGRESS	High	Average	Low		SPECIFIC PROGRESS	High	Average	Low
Site A	2	13	6		Site A	4	13	4
Site B	9	14	1		Site B	5	15	2
Site C	1	3	4		Site C	0	5	2
SOCIAL FEEDBACK	High	Average	Low		SOCIAL FEEDBACK	High	Average	Low
Site A	6	12	3		Site A	4	12	5
Site B	5	17	2		Site B	5	14	3
Site C	0	2	6		Site C	0	4	3
OBSERVATIONAL COMPARISON	High	Average	Low		OBSERVATIONAL COMPARISON	High	Average	Low
Site A	4	11	6		Site A	2	18	1
Site B	5	19	0		Site B	2	20	0
Site C	0	6	2		Site C	0	6	1
PHYSIOLOGICAL STATES	High	Average	Low		PHYSIOLOGICAL STATES	High	Average	Low
Site A	6	11	4		Site A	5	13	3
Site B	11	11	2		Site B	8	11	3
Site C	1	2	5		Site C	1	5	1